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Cold Stone rolls into Midway

By Bruce Pringle
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Cold Stone Creamery, the national chain of ice cream parlors that serve entertainment along with cones, now has two locations in coastal Sussex County.

The newer one, in the parking lot of the Pelican Square shopping center in Midway, opened Saturday. The franchise is owned by Mary and Dick Manskers, who also own the area's original Cold Stone, in downtown Rehoboth Beach.

Mary Manskers said last week that the Rehoboth store, which opened last spring, has been a stunning success.

"We knew we'd be busy," she said. "It was staggering."

Cold Stone complements its rich ice cream with a show-biz atmosphere featuring singing and chanting employees and customer-participation games. The razzle-dazzle not only entertains patrons, it distracts them from the fact that obtaining a Cold Stone cone may require a longer wait than they would experience at a less popular ice cream store.

"When lines are long, you don't want people just standing there," Manskers said.

Customers at the new store can expect to be invited to compete in a relay race of sorts, in which M&M's will be transported on spoons, Manker revealed. Unlike some activities at the Rehoboth Cold Stone, those at Pelican Square will be strictly indoor, she said. There is too much vehicular traffic in the shopping center to risk taking the show outside.

The new location was chosen by corporate officials, as is the custom in the Scottsdale, Ariz.-based operation.

The company emphasizes its desire to operate in spots that are busy from late morning to late night. Within a few hundred feet of the Pelican Square Cold Stone are a couple big-name stores -- Staples and Marshalls -- as well as a pizza restaurant and businesses specializing in movie rentals and video games. A Super Fresh grocery anchors the other end of the shopping center.

Cold Stone has been ranked among the fastest growing U.S. franchise systems in the United States, with more than 800 outlets.

Manskers and her husband plan to help continue that growth. They are scheduled to open a store in Salisbury, Md., by early next summer and two in Ocean City, Md., in the next year or so. Neither Salisbury nor Ocean City has a Cold Stone.

Meanwhile, they are preparing for a grand opening at Pelican Square in which proceeds will be donated to the Lower Delaware Autism Foundation. The event, scheduled for Saturday, will include free samples, door prizes and -- from noon to 4 p.m. -- face painting for kids.



Cold Stone Creamery owner Mary Manker stands center with crew members Andrea Barsan, left, and Ovidiu Moldovan, right, at the franchise's new location in Pelican Square Shopping Center at Midway.