



The Beacon Journal  
August 24, 2004

## Glee tops ice cream

Cold Stone Creamery employees also serve lively tunes, laughs in Jackson Township

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Would you like your ice cream in a waffle cone or bowl? What about a song with that?

At one local ice-cream store, employees break into song when customers put money in the tip jar.

Depending on the makeup of the "crew members" working at the time and their talent level, the songs can either be worthy of being showcased on stage or described as off-key enthusiasm.

Cold Stone Creamery, a Scottsdale, Ariz.-based chain, opened a franchise in the Akron area in May. Franchise owners Carla and Kevin Lally and Christine D'Amato opened Cold Stone's first franchise in Cleveland on Chagrin Boulevard in Woodmere last fall. The location in Jackson Township at The Strip is their second Northeast Ohio franchise, although there are other franchise owners who own locations near Cleveland.

Carla Lally said she and her husband were familiar with The Strip area and "knew it was a viable place to do business."

In fact, the Jackson Township location was the company's 689th store to open in the country and "broke all grand-opening records of any store that opened before it," said Lally, who declined to share any figures for the store.

Lally said the singing is an added bonus for some customers, but the premium ice cream that is put on a cold-stone slab and mixed with your choice of toppings is what sets the chain apart.

But it's not cheap. The price for a small bowl, called a "Like It" size, is \$3.29. The "Love It" size is \$3.59, and the "Gotta Have It" size is \$3.89. Mix-ins are 59 cents each. If you want a waffle cone or bowl, it's 59 cents, but if you want chocolate or nuts on the waffle cone, it's \$1.09.

Amy Ansel brought her four young children to get an ice-cream treat after back-to-school shopping. Her tally for five people was about \$13. Ansel's 11-year-old son, Andrew, put some money in the tip jar to get the workers to sing. He had seen a previous customer's tip elicit a song.

"I liked it," Andrew said.



**Elise Bagnoli, 6, enjoys some ice cream with toppings.**

Employees Seth Engelhardt, 20, and Matt Humerickhouse, 16, a junior at Jackson High School, admitted they're not the greatest singers.

“Some of the singing off key is part of the charm,” said Engelhardt, a graphic arts major at Stark State College of Technology.

Said Humerickhouse: “I'm a band peson.”

Store Manager Paul Markwood said the singing is to keep the enthusiasm of the crowd, which can sometimes go out the door on weekends. There are also times when crew members play trivia games with customers or dance to keep them entertained.

The company takes a different approach in looking for its employees. They hold auditions, where they ask the potential employees to sing a song or act out a skit. Lally said she and the other franchise owners went to area high school drama departments to advertise for workers last spring.

“We ask them to take a minute to entertain us somehow. Whether it's telling us a joke or doing an impersonation or doing a dance or singing a song, or doing a cheer -- whatever they're comfortable doing entertaining us,” Lally said.

Jami Thompson, public relations specialist for Cold Stone's headquarters, said all crew members don't have to know how to sing.

“It's more like if you like to have fun. Not every crew member is an opera singer. It's all about personality and having fun,” she said.

The real star, Lally said, is the ice cream, which ranges from french vanilla to cake batter, the nearly 40 options of mix-ins, like candy bars and cherry pie filling, and ice cream cakes.

Some customers just prefer their ice cream plain.

Kim and Ed Denholm stopped by and tried lemon sorbet and raspberry sorbet cones.

“We just heard about it before and heard that it was good,” Kim Denholm said.