

# Pizzeria owner making dough, name at new restaurant

By Mary Beth Phillips

Michael Roselli doesn't know what to make of all the attention he has received in the last few months.

First he was featured by Greg Cox in the gourmet column in the News & Observer in early February, then Susan Dahlin appeared and put him on Channel 5 the day before Valentine's Day.

He says he just wanted to come to a quiet place and take it easy. "I didn't expect the growth in this area," he said.

His restaurant, Michael's Pizza, in Cary Plaza at the corner of High House and Old Apex roads, seats about 45. He makes his own dough in a dough machine, he cuts his own cheese by hand, and puts together his own pasta dishes in the store's kitchen.

Now, he finds himself in an uncomfortable situation. "I'd rather take care of the customers myself," he said. "But I don't like them to have to wait."

So he is considering expanding into a vacant store next door and adding a sports bar with a satellite system and lots of television sets.

"It would be a little different — a sports bar where you can eat quality pizza. Other sports bars have hamburgers and fries," Roselli said. "It would have the same family at-



**TAKING CARE OF THE CUSTOMER**—Michael Roselli greets Bud Thornton of Boston and Pam Wyatt and daughter, Bridget, of Cary. The three were having lunch at Michael's on a recent afternoon.

mosphere, except you could smoke."

He is still negotiating the lease agreement for the deal.

Roselli opened his restaurant four years ago after moving to the Cary

area from South Florida. He learned his pizza making skills on Long Island, where he was born and raised. He followed his sister and parents to Florida, where he met his wife, Charla, who is from Venezuela. They ran Nola's Pizza in South Florida for 11 years. When he wanted to relocate, North Carolina was as far north as his wife was willing to go.

He spent a year cooking for a fraternity at N.C. State before opening Michael's.

"I liked that job, but I wanted to go back into business for myself," he said.

He employs nine people, and gets some help from his family. Charla makes homemade desserts for the restaurant, including cheesecakes, cannoli, flan and special occasion desserts like pumpkin cheesecake at Halloween.

She also holds down a part-time job at Cary Medical Center on Walnut Street.

His nine-year-old son, Michael, helps wait tables for lunch in the summer. "The customers like to see that," Roselli said. His youngest son, Carl, 5, will help out more as he gets older. The boys attend A.B. Combs Elementary in Raleigh.

Most of his business is repeat

business, and people who hear about his pizza from friends. "My best advertising is word of mouth," he said.

Bud Thornton of Boston, who travels to the Cary area from Boston about once a month never misses a chance to eat at Michael's. "He has the best spaghetti and meatballs I've ever had," he said.

The restaurant sports a tiny sign that says "Pizza" at the top of the plaza. Roselli says it's convenient to downtown Cary, the Preston area out to N.C. 55, and the Killdare Farms area. "I'm really centrally located for these areas," he said.

If he opens the sports bar, he is considering closing for lunch, at least a few days a week, because he will need to be open later at night. He already works about 50 hours a week, leaving the business in the able hands of his night manager Chris Livino a few nights a week.

He likes to spend his spare time with his children. "We go to the movies and go bowling. We go see the Ice Caps." They were disappointed when the National Hockey League franchise fell through.

Roselli is satisfied with his situation. "I can continue to do this for some time," he said.

## Developers forecast more commercial buildings, most speculative

By Mary Beth Phillips

If development of commercial properties owned by Weeks/Lichtin continues at its current pace, there could be 40,000 more people in the next 10 years showing up for work in Morrisville.

Dave Lindner told members of the Morrisville Chamber of Commerce at the "Issues and Eggs" breakfast at Sorrento's Restaurant that Morrisville is Harold Lichtin's "pond that he likes to play in," with about 260 acres remaining in or near the town that he will continue to develop.

Dee Hallyburton of Carolantic Realty, developers of Southport Business Park, also presented information about her company's future expansion plans to about 45 chamber members at the breakfast on Thursday, March 13.

Lindner, the vice president and director of leasing for Weeks/Lichtin, told the group that in 1977, when Lichtin graduated from N.C. State, he came to Morrisville and bought about 500 acres of land along Airport Boulevard.

"Everybody said he was crazy, buying land way out there," he said. Today, "everybody thinks he's brilliant."

On Jan. 1, Lichtin merged with Weeks Corporation to become one of the largest developers of office and flex space in the area. It gave him the ability to raise equity on the New York Stock Exchange, instead of the bank, and also gave him the ability to compete with Highwoods, the area's other large office developer, Lindner said.

Lichtin plans on developing office, distribution and flex buildings at a rate of 500,000 square feet a year, Lindner said.

He already owns about 2.2 million square feet of office and flex space, most of it in Morrisville.

Weeks/Lichtin's most well-known development, Perimeter Park, is located on the east side of Airport Boulevard near its intersection with Interstate-40.

It contains 474,000 square feet of space, and its most well-known client is Northern Telecom.

Perimeter Park West features 20 buildings and 414,000 square feet of space. Pharmaceutical Product Development, AT&T and Intersolv are the most prominent tenants.

He is also developing Enterprise Center, along McCrimmon Parkway on the south side of Perimeter Park West, which features two huge U-shaped buildings, and a third 71,000-square-foot building which will open in July.

Construction will begin on a fourth 150,000-square-foot building, to be occupied at the first part of 1998. Prominent tenants there are Telecel, Apria Health Care and Zevatech.

On the other side of Enterprise Center, Metro Center features three buildings and totals about 270,000 square feet.

Plans call for a development called Paramount Center, which will be northwest of Perimeter Park and south of I-40. Lichtin is waiting for the Outer Loop of the belt-line to be put through next to the development before beginning construction.

Outside of the Morrisville city limits, north of I-40 at the edge of the Raleigh-Durham International Airport, Weeks/Lichtin is developing Woodlake Industrial Center, which features three buildings of about 500,000 square feet.

Plans call for an additional 340,000 square feet in three more buildings. The new buildings will house offices for Time-Warner cable along with other smaller office tenants.

"It will bring in several hundred people who will shop and eat in Morrisville," Lindner said.

Most of the buildings are built on a speculative basis, but there has been no problem leasing them. For example, the building in Enterprise Center which is slated to open in July is already 100 percent leased.

"We build it, they're kind of coming," Lindner said. "This is a

dynamic area...we're the most active developer in the area."

Southport is located on 48 acres along Aviation Parkway.

Ms. Hallyburton, broker for Carolantic Realty and leasing agent for Southport, joked about being David to Lindner's Goliath, but both said they refer people to each other to try to keep them within Morrisville.

Ms. Hallyburton joined Carolantic Realty in 1989. The first building at Southport, in which she was interviewed, was about 12 percent leased at the time, she said. She asked how long the building

had been standing, and they told her 18 months.

"But something in the back of my head told me Morrisville is going to grow," she said. Within six months, building 1 was completely leased and building 2 was more than 50 percent leased. In six more months, both buildings were completely full and plans were under way for building 3.

Today, developers are planning buildings 11 and 13, and looking for about 20 acres more to continue to develop. (Building 12 is already completed, along with 1 through 10).

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## Roaming Rover could cost big bucks; board toughens animal control law

The Morrisville Board of Commissioners put a little more "bite" into its animal control law, allowing the town to collect fines if animals are found running loose or damaging property.

The town's current law was last updated in 1982.

Under the new law, tickets for \$25 may be imposed on people who allow their animals to become a "public nuisance." The fine would increase exponentially for repeated offenses within 12 months, to \$60 for the second violation, and \$100 for each subsequent violation.

If fines are not paid within 10 days, the town may take the owner to court.

In the existing law, people could receive a misdemeanor fine of \$5 and court costs for a violation. "We don't get the proceeds of the fine, even though our personnel spend their time enforcing the ordinance," Town Manager David Hodgkins told the board.

"This is a badly needed ordinance," said Mayor Pro Tem Billy Sauls. "It's not our intent to make money, though it does help."

Commissioner Mark Silver-Smith supported the law but wanted to see another law enacted for cats.

"I don't have a problem with dogs running at large in my neighborhood. I do have a problem with cats," he said.

The law adopted 4-1, with Commissioner C. T. Moore abstaining because his son is the animal control officer.

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The three potential sites for purchase are on either side of Evans and Aviation and directly behind Southport. A ball-park estimate of land cost now is about \$80,000 per acre, Ms. Hallyburton said. She expects to announce a land purchase within a few months.

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