

Appetite for Success

Entrepreneur delivers satisfied customers

By MARTHA REINKE

There's nothing like calling out for pizza delivery during a hectic day at the office. But haven't you ever wanted something else? Maybe some linguine alle vongole, homecooked veal cutlet, hefty ribs of pork and beef, Tandoori chicken or perhaps some gourmet stuffed shrimp.

Meet Maureen Keady, the creative entrepreneur behind an innovative restaurant delivery service called *Waiters To You*.

In an effort to meet the needs of both executives and other customers, Keady has established a growing list of restaurants from which customers can have food delivered. Included are Prego, the Hungry Hunter, Quick Cuisine of India, Kowloon Chinese, Peter's Fish & Chips, and Mrs. White's Golden Rule Cafe. A new list with approximately 15 Valley restaurants will be printed in December to meet the diverse needs of a growing customer base.

"The idea came because I wanted the service and it wasn't out there," Keady says. "I just wanted to be able to have any kind of food delivered. It's a very needed service for today's lifestyle."

As a 28-year-old with little experience in running her own business, Keady's toughest job has been convincing restaurants to participate in her service. "Some had second thoughts. Their reputation was on the line as well as ours," she says. "They love us now. Restaurants call us."

David Protz, manager of Prego, says the service has helped his business and that the restaurant would rather customers eat take-out from Prego if they can't physically come into the restaurant to dine. "The people they're serving are getting our food," he notes.

Two years ago, Keady was a typical yuppie, working from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. for a semi-conductor firm. She saw a need for the service, however, and abruptly quit her job to pursue a dream of owning her own business. "I didn't have any money saved up. I borrowed from my relatives," she says. "I really was very much undercapitalized for what I wanted to do."

The business, which is now run from her home near Christown Mall, opened in July. She now has eight restaurants using her service and her two waiters are running ragged, so she's hiring two more to keep up with the growing number of restaurants and clientele being served.

Fifty customers run the gamut from secretaries to top executives and clients include law firms, engineering firms, and advertising agencies. Keady provides lunch and dinner service, with dinner being the most popular

"We probably do anywhere from 10 deliveries on the low side to 25 on the high side" daily, she says, noting that the number of meals varies with each delivery. Her delivery area encompasses a 10-mile radius, from 35th Avenue to Jefferson Street.

To Keady, the need for a service with quality food was evident. Restaurants continually face the threat of losing customers to grocery stores that are stocking up with bakeries, delis, fresh pizza, and carryout salad bars. "We can bring food to people who wouldn't go to that restaurant otherwise," Keady notes.

So successful is the concept that Keady is now selling *Waiters To You* franchises nationally. "We have one we're doing the finishing touches on in Florida and we have people negotiating in Scottsdale, Tempe, and Mesa," she says. "We expect to be pretty much nationwide in five years."

Keady has hired a sales company to help market the franchises and spends a good 10 hours a day developing the business. "We're starting fairly small, being real careful on our growth. Because it's a new concept, we can't really study anybody and see how its being done," she notes.