

Sonic restaurant joins the growing Gretna business community

by Darlene Hollwager

Staff Writer

Dave Gulizia is part of a family that has been in the convenience store business a long, long time. He is well versed in the setup and operation of this type of business, having grown up with it. When he and his family moved to Gretna to manager the Speedee Mart, it was old territory to him, and he eventually bought the business.

A Sonic restaurant seems, at first glance, to be a step out of the familiar for Gulizia, but it really isn't. Gulizia and his wife Theresa are part-owners of Got Food, Inc., which Gulizia and his brother Tom run. They have had a Sonic in Auburn for three year, so it really is familiar territory.

"We had a Sonic in the plans for Gretna 18 months ago," stated Gulizia. "We felt there was opportunity to be successful with it, since there wasn't a fast food place in Gretna with the extended menu we carry."

Their first step was contacting RTR Enterprises, which owns the property where Sonic sets. The two had to work out how a Sonic would fit in the plans for developing the rest of the property and reach an agreement.

Highway access was given to RTR Enterprises at the time Standing Stone was developed, only because the land they owned was separate from Standing Stone. However, when a



Dave and Theresa Gulizia, with their children Dawson, age 4, and Madison, age 7, sit outside of their new Sonic restaurant, happy that it is finally open for business.

Sonic was proposed, the state said they didn't have access because of limited access rules on a highway. RTR showed the agreement they had made with the state to have use of an entry off of the highway. The state then found their copy and the project proceed.

The next step was contacting Sonic's corporate offices. They sent people to observe the site and location and perform a demographics study. Once that was approved, a long-term lease was signed, with RTR Enterprises, and the architectural drawings were started.

Stated Gulizia, "The inside of the building is the same as other Sonics, but corporate offers options for the outside and we took those options to another level."

Corporate was so impressed with what Gulizia did with the outside design, that they are looking at using that design for their new restaurants.

The application process for permits from the city of Gretna went smoothly. Overland Constructors was hired as the contractor and they did the job in 67 working days.

"Even with all the rain we had this spring, they stayed on schedule," commented Gulizia. "They did a great job for us."

Next came the hiring process. A local girl, Jenny Bazer, was hired as the manager; and Mary Ekstrom, from Ashland, was hired as assistant manager. Bazer had worked for Gulizia for a few years at Shell Speedee Mart.

• Continued on page 4