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All Eyes On: Heath Hall

Truman graduate will open barbecue restaurant in Virginia

BY EMMA MUELLER
Staff Reporter

Oink. Oink. Oink. No, it isn't H1N1 that has people talking. Pork Barrel BBQ, co-founded by Truman alumnus Heath Hall, has been gaining quite the buzz lately.

Hall, an employee of former Missouri Senator Jim Talent, created the company along with Brett Thompson in the winter of 2006. Not only will they open a restaurant in the Del Ray neighborhood of Alexandria, Va. this spring, but Pork Barrel BBQ also holds the No. 1 spot for barbecue on Twitter with 18,000 followers.

Hall said the idea for the business resulted from a late night craving for some barbecue during a Senate budget debate.

"While the Senate was debating pork-barrel spending projects and earmarks, we were debating what we were going to have for dinner that night," Hall said. "I had pizza for about four or five nights in a row and, coming from Missouri, I was like 'Man, wouldn't it be great if there were a barbecue restaurant somewhere in the neighborhood?' There wasn't anything good in the neighborhood, so we started thinking 'Pork barrel spending, pork-barrel barbecue.'"

Hall turned his small glimmer of an idea into a successful establishment. Pork Barrel BBQ consists of two products: a barbecue sauce and an all-American spice rub. The products are made with all-natural ingredients and contain no preservatives or MSG. Hall doesn't classify Pork Barrel BBQ sauce as one particular style, but instead said it reflects his roots: politics.

"We'll be able to bring a little bit of all the styles of barbecue to the restaurant," Hall said. "Obviously, Brett and I being from Missouri, we are kind of schooled in the Kansas City style, but we want to be able to hopefully let them [the customers] recall some memories of their favorite [barbecue] restaurant back home."

The restaurant will feature sauces from all regions of the country, not just the Kansas City influence.

"We're going to have Carolina vinegar sauce and a Carolina barbecue sauce," Hall said. "Our original sauce I would classify somewhere between the Kansas City and Texas style sauce. It's a smoky, tangy sauce. It's got a little bit of heat, but it's not super hot. We're going to be doing a hot sauce, a sweeter sauce and a mango-chipotle barbecue sauce."

In addition to their brand new restaurant "Pork Barrel BBQ" opening this spring, Hall and Thompson were featured on the ABC show "Shark Tank," which allows entrepreneurs to pitch their idea in front of five investors in the hopes that their idea will be backed financially by one or more of the investors.

"It was really a shock to us when we got an e-mail and a call from Mark Burnett Productions saying that they've been following our company," Hall said. "Three weeks later we finished about 50 pages of paperwork, a five-minute audition tape and got the call back from them that they were interested in us coming out. It was a pretty interesting experience."

The opportunity for this level of exposure was something Hall said he never thought he would achieve. Hall said not only did they have their very own Hollywood star trailer, complete with their names on the door, but he



Photo submitted by Heath Hall
Truman alumnus Heath Hall (left) is the co-founder of the company Pork Barrel BBQ. Hall and his business partner Brett Thompson also appeared on an ABC television show, "Shark Tank."

and Thompson also were sworn to secrecy for two months until the show aired.

"Out of the five sharks, we ended up getting a deal with Barbara Corcoran, who is a real estate mogul from New York," Hall said. "She gave us \$50,000 for a 50 percent stake in the company, and we're

really excited to work with her. She's a real shark, a real go-getter. We're still trying to finalize everything, but we're sure it's going to be a great partnership."

Even with all the new opportunities that have resulted because of one late night idea, Hall always has had a love for food, especially

barbecue.

"My dad has always been known as the post office guy of barbecue," Hall said. "He's always barbecuing in rain, sleet, snow, summer, winter, fall, spring. It doesn't matter, he's always out there on the grill. So a lot of my love for barbecue came from him."

Retreat features sustainability

BY MICHELLE MARTIN
Assistant Features Editor

Calling eco-friendly students, faculty and staff of every shape and size: Your time has arrived!

The Sept. 14 Sustainability Initiative Retreat marked a pivotal step toward following through with the Sustainability Initiative, which aims to inspire students and the Kirksville area to participate in an active movement an environmentally and economically sound community.

Judi Schweitzer is president of Schweitzer and Associates, a real estate consulting firm for businesses and institutions interested in sustainable development. Schweitzer, who graduated from Truman more than twenty years ago, worked with students and faculty last semester to pass a resolution called the Truman Sustainability Initiative, which aims to involve Truman and the Kirksville community in an active collaboration toward sustainability. She said sustainability is an economic system that weighs monetary, environmental and social costs and benefits.

"Whether it's reducing greenhouse gas emissions, enhancing energy efficiency, reducing transportation impacts, reducing waste impacts from food and energy, etc., it's in everybody's best interest to live lightly on the land, but not everybody sees how

closely connected that is," Schweitzer said.

Sustainable development is different than environmentalism. Sustainability focuses on methods to unite economic development with environmentally and socially sound practices, while environmentalism centers on actions that benefit the environment but not necessarily the economy. Before the Sustainability Initiative, Truman's various environmentally-conscious organizations were directed more toward environmental activities, but the initiative will unite these movements toward concrete goals, which fall under the umbrella of sustainability.

The retreat included Truman students, faculty members, administration and various residents of Kirksville, as well as individuals from the Kirksville city government, she said. Several "breakout sessions" occurred during the retreat. Everyone separated into seven groups, each with a specific sustainable focus, such as energy initiatives or waste/recycling initiatives. Each group focused on developing goals to attain between now and the year 2020.

"There are people who work for the city with goals that are all very similar and complementary to the goals of the University," Schweitzer said. "They're not necessarily talking to each other, but they're so closely aligned. The sustainability initiative is one forum where we have the opportunity

to come together and realize how closely aligned we are with some of the greater long term goals they have and find ways to work together to realize those goals sooner rather than later."

The retreat is the first of many steps in increasing Truman's visibility as an environmentally sustainable community, she said. She hopes to spark more interest in the project, which could invite federal or state funding for projects such as retrofitting buildings to run on renewable energy.

E.C.O. president Danielle Zimmel, junior, attended the retreat and joined the Waste/Recycling Initiatives group. She said it enabled the group to develop concrete goals to attain before 2020, such as making reusable containers available for use in the SUB so students could take home leftover food and save containers. A few other goals included completely trayless dining halls and a wider composting program.

"Before, we knew we had these big goals in mind that we want to accomplish, but now that we have these pseudo-committees, we're actually going with these goals that we had to write down on paper and report to the rest of the group," Zimmel said. "These things are going to get accomplished."

Zimmel said the retreat taught her the infinite potential created by the initiative, which will give administrative support for

student-led projects in the future. To involve more students in the Truman community, another conference open to anyone interested will take place in October.

"By having the sustainability initiative signed it has pretty much opened the door for any environmentally focused project to come into fruition," she said.

Members of the Kirksville community also participated at the retreat, such as Director of Public Works John Buckwalter, who explored options within the Built Environments breakout group.

During breakout sessions, Buckwalter said his group discussed the possibility of using recycled materials, construction materials with a longer lifespan and conserving water.

"Sustainability [is] important in the public works arena," he said. "Everything costs money, so if we can reuse, recycle, reduce fuel consumption and other things then that saves money for the taxpayers."

Although these ideas will not come to fruition overnight, Buckwalter said he hopes the network formed during the Sustainability Retreat will serve as a huge asset as each member tries to do his or her part to accomplish their goals.

"I think it's probably important that this be a sustained effort, that we continue to build on this first workshop and go from there," he said.

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