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Photo by Damian Soane/TMN

The new Holiday Inn Express Hotel being built at 2523 S. Franklin St. is estimated to be finished and open in September of this year. This new Holiday Inn Express is being built on the former site of Milano's Italian Restaurant while the other Holiday Inn Express already in Kirksville is going to be rebranded.

Four new businesses set to open in Kirksville within the year

BY NICOLAS TELEP

Staff Writer

A number of new businesses, including two national chain retail stores and two hotels, are set to open in Kirksville by the end of the year.

Wisconsin-based home improvement chain Menards and Oklahoma-based craft store Hobby Lobby will be building and opening locations. Depending on construction timelines, Menards aims to be open by the end of the year, while Hobby Lobby could open as early as August. A Hampton Inn and a new Holiday Inn Express are also slated to be built. Hampton Inn is scheduled to open in June, and the new Holiday Inn Express is expected to open in September. Menards, Hobby Lobby and Hampton Inn will all be located on North Baltimore St. between Missouri Route 6 and Barrington Road, and the new Holiday Inn Express will be located on South Franklin St. on the former site of Milano's Italian Restaurant.

Assistant City Manager Ashley Young said both hotels are under construction, Menards has purchased land to build on and Hobby Lobby is preparing its site.

"Our local economy is constantly changing, and we've had a lot of great developments in the last year or so," Young said. "There's a lot of good news in terms of retail and commercial activity in the city of Kirksville."

Young said one of the partners in the development of the Hampton Inn lived in Kirksville and developed the Comfort Inn. Menards will be a corporate store — not franchised — like all other stores in the chain. The new Holiday Inn Express is being developed by Paul Williams, who recently opened a Holiday Inn Express in Sikeston, Mis-

souri. Hobby Lobby will be developed by Kirksville Commons, a local limited liability corporation. Young said Menards did not request any city assistance or incentives for their new store, while the other three new businesses will be located in newly formed community improvement districts, where sales tax is 1 percent higher than normal to fund improvements to the surrounding areas.

In addition to the community improvement district, the Holiday Inn Express has been granted chapter 353 property tax abatement because of its location on the site of an abandoned restaurant, which was designated as "blighted." Young said the abatement allows the new business to pay property tax at the rate that would have been assessed on the previous building. Young said the new developments should be good for the city's economy.

"In general, more economic activity means more jobs for our community," Young said. "It means an improved quality of life. It is important to keep more tax revenue, more revenue in general, in Kirksville not only for our small businesses, but also for our city as well."

Young said the hope is that people will stay in Kirksville to shop instead of going to cities like Columbia, Quincy or Ottumwa. He said the city is also aiming to become more of an economic and commercial center for the surrounding area.

Kirksville Tourism Director Debi Boughton said the Hampton Inn and the new Holiday Inn Express will add approximately 70 rooms each, 140 rooms altogether, to the 394 rooms currently available in Kirksville and the surrounding area.

"We have needed a new hotel for quite a while," said Boughton. "The

tourism office and the city economic development office were talking to many hotel developers to try to have them come to town and, all of a sudden, we had two that were coming."

Boughton said the new rooms are much-needed for activities going on in the community. For example, Boughton said on the weekend of April 20 there are 50 people staying at a hotel in Macon — in addition to those staying in Kirksville — because of all the events happening that weekend. She said the tourism department has been looking for a new hotel to be built for about three years. Boughton also said the customer pays a 3.6 percent occupancy tax in addition to sales tax for each night in a hotel room. The revenue from this tax goes to the tourism department. Boughton anticipates an increase in revenue to the department because of the greater number of hotel rooms. Boughton said more people are expected to visit Kirksville, and it will be much more convenient for people who come to town for specific events.

"Those many times that we are so full that people are staying in Macon and other places, we will have those visitors actually getting to stay in Kirksville where their event is," said Boughton.

Boughton said the new Holiday Inn Express will include a conference room with a capacity of 100, and she would like to have another large conference room available in the city. She said the city would like to bring some larger conferences and conventions to town, and the largest gatherings the city can host at this point are about 400 people. Boughton also said the current Holiday Inn Express will be rebranded but will remain in business.

UpChuckles to feature professors in charity comedy show

BY MADDIE MCDERMOTT

Staff Writer

Truman State University's stand-up comedy group, UpChuckles, will host its first Faculty Charity Show at 7 p.m. Friday at William Matthew Middle School, located 1515 S. Cottage Grove in Kirksville.

The show will feature five faculty members — Program Adviser for Organizational Engagement and Leadership Damon Pee, Annual Fund Officer for the Office of Advancement Dylan Phillips, Communication Professor Jared Young, English professor Christine Harker and University President Sue Thomas.

Jay Self, faculty adviser for UpChuckles and Communication Department Chair said the idea of a faculty show has been simmering for some time.

"This is our first year trying it," Self said. "We've been toying with it for two years. We've never managed to get it organized because the group is relatively small, but now we've got a good sized group, so we're ready to roll."

Self said a student member of UpChuckles has been assigned to coach each faculty member in their comedy including the ideas, delivery and writing, using a process similar to the one UpChuckles members use.

"[When UpChuckles practices sketches] we divide into smaller groups of three to four and take turns saying 'we got some new ideas,' and 'here's what we've written so far,'" Self said. "We read the joke to the group, the rest of the group tells whether or not they like the idea ... it's a place for [comedians] to bounce ideas and get other directions and other ways to present the material."

Self said he is confident the show will be a success.

"It will be a fun and entertaining show," Self said. "Our shows do pretty well as a general rule, and now you're going to have people who you're not used to seeing do comedy doing comedy, so it'll be even funnier, and it all benefits a good cause," Self said.

UpChuckles president junior Lisa Simms said professors in the past have shown interest in doing stand up comedy, which is how the show came about.

Simms said the participants agreed to be part of the show a few months ago and have been meeting with their coaches to rehearse, write and rewrite weekly or biweekly ever since.

Simms, Leine Jakel and professor Chris Outzen will judge the faculty members and determine who wins the title of "Funniest Faculty Member on Campus."

Simms said one UpChuckles member will perform during the scoring process at the end, simply to keep the energy of the show going while the judges score, but other than that the staff will perform during the bulk of the show.

"Please come out and enjoy the fruits of these wonderful faculty members' labor," Simms said. "It's a great way to help a wonderful cause and a fun way to get to know your new president."

UpChuckles vice president junior Lawrence Cobb has been coaching Thomas the last several months. Cobb said acting as comedy counselor to Thomas has posed a fun, interesting and scary challenge.

"With every joke I write, I have to work around political neutrality, an absolute absence of crass or lewd material, President Thomas' background and what will seem genuine, making sure to write not only funnily, but intelligently and much more," Cobb said. "... There's a level of risk for any comic. You can alienate or offend a great number of people without trying to. This makes it very difficult to write stand-up for someone who has to defend the reputation of an office like university president. President Thomas has given me quite the challenge."

Tickets will be on sale today, March 23, and Friday in the Student Union Building, Barnett Hall 1400 and at the door. Tickets are \$5 and all proceeds go to the Food Bank of Central and Northeast Missouri.



Photo by Damian Soane/TMN

The new Hampton Inn Suites hotel being built at 2604 North Baltimore Street is estimated to open in June of this year.



Photo by Damian Soane/TMN

The new Menards being built on North Baltimore St. is estimated to be finished at the end of this year.