

Reid's Dairy approaching 100 years

Many improvements in store

Posted By HENRY BURY, THE INTELLIGENCER

By Henry Bury

Saturday marked another chapter in the almost century-long business success story that is Reid's Dairy.

The home of the world famous Loonie Milkshake unveiled its new ice cream parlour and retail store to hundreds of guests who dropped by the Bell Boulevard site.

The celebration featured in-store tours, create-a-new-sundae contest sampling, refreshments, family activities and an appearance by Shaker the cow.

"I am very proud of our renovated ice cream parlour and store and I'm looking forward to celebrating our 100th anniversary in our new store in 2010," said Stephen Quickert, president of Reid's Dairy.

He said there is literally something for the whole family to see in the new ice cream parlour/retail store.

The walls are full of vintage photographs including a wrap-around movie reel highlighting the history of Reid's Dairy. Large Shaker the cow cut-outs stand out on the colourful walls. Children rush to press the Shaker button that makes its in-house cow moo and then press the train button that sends the dairy train on its way through the store.

"The viewing window has been enlarged to allow guests to see our production facility," Quickert said. "A television monitor educates families on how milk is processed from farm to table."

There is also large group seating available (30 seats). A private party room will open to hold birthday parties, but only after its new line of ice cream cakes go into production.

Quickert said the retail store and ice cream parlour represents another milestone in the storied history of Reid's Dairy since its founding in 1910 by Leonard Reid and being run by the Quickert family for the past 41 years.

The dairy has celebrated many "firsts" over the past year.

"Last year, we became a peanut-free facility so that all ice cream products are peanut free," he said.

Quickert said it was also the first dairy in North America to introduce the reusable screw cap single serve dairy carton used mainly in schools. The cartons also display healthy messages for children.

It will be expanding its peanut-free toppings selection and will soon begin making its own waffle cones.

Reid's Dairy was acquired in 1967 by Arthur Quickert and operated by his son, Armin, who emigrated from wartorn Germany in 1951. (Arthur Quickert's widow, Elizabeth, celebrated her 96th birthday Aug. 26 in Belleville).

Armin Quickert converted the same door-to-door dairy business on Parker Street into the largest independent fluid milk processor in Ontario. In 1985, he moved the entire operation into a new facility at its current Bell Boulevard location.

The 100-foot fairytale castle -- a landmark to passing motorists on Highway 401 -- opened in 1991 and was inspired by Armin Quickert's German heritage

He has since retired from the business and his sons have taken over -

Stephen Quickert, 42, is president of Reid's Dairy while his 40-year-old brother, David, is president of the 21 Reid's Milky Way stores in Ontario.

"We're the fourth generation of a family business because my daughter, Rachael, is now working here," Stephen Quickert said.

The 5.5-acre Bell Boulevard site boasts a full dairy operation producing fluid milk, creams, ice cream and all natural juices and drinks.

The dairy operation covers 50,000 square feet of space and has undergone three major additions over the past two decades.

"All the processing and packing equipment is state-of-the-art and automated and can be viewed through the store's viewing window," Stephen Quickert said.

The property also includes a children's playground, covered gazebo for family picnics and the Reid's Dairy Village plaza consisting of seven other retailers offering a variety of products and services.

Reid's Dairy produces two per cent of the fluid milk supply in Ontario, making it the largest independent dairy operation in the province. Its product is distributed to retailers and institutions from Ottawa to Hamilton as well as its own chain of 21 Reid's Dairy stores.

The dairy employs 90 full and part-time people and is a 24/7 operation between the delivery of fluid milk from area farmers to pouring out the final product, be it milk, table cream or ice cream.

"We do everything from receiving the raw milk from the farms to retailing of the product," he said.

The dairy is an Agriculture Canada inspected plant and has a fully-equipped in-house laboratory and staff "to guarantee quality of products we produce from this facility."

"The freshest milk in the area is available at the dairy store and that's something we're very proud of," he said.

David Quickert went even further.

"I hear all the time that children won't drink milk out of the area because it doesn't taste as good as what they're accustomed to at Reid's Dairy. That's a testament to four generations of our family in the dairy business," he said.

Reid's Dairy uses fresh cream in all its ice cream products.

Stephen Quickert said Reid's chocolate milk is made of all-natural ingredients "and people can taste the difference. Even our juices are made with all natural ingredients."

Angela Quickert, Stephen's wife, and manager of public relations, said Reid's Dairy makes a point to get involved in the region it serves.

"We're very proud of our employees and the support we provide for the community," she said.

For the past five years, the dairy has supported the Food for Learning program in area schools by donating free breakfast milk to schools.

In 2007, the family-run business donated 2,242 bags of two-per-cent milk worth \$10,000 to the school breakfast program.

Reid's also supports" the Gleaners Food Bank in Belleville and other food banks in Trenton, Campbellford and Northumberland by donating milk in partnership with the Dairy Farmers of Ontario.

"Our family is also proud to have donated \$200,000 to the Excellence for Life campaign for Quinte Health Care and now we're seeing that money at work with the construction of the new hospital wing in Belleville," she said.

Dave Quickert said the 21 Reid's Dairy stores stretch from Kingston to Markham and carries a full line of dairy products as well as items from Maple Dale Cheese and Stirling Creamery Butter. Each store also carries such staples as bread, frozen food products and an ice cream parlour.

"We are hoping to grow the stores through franchising," Quickert said. "There is a ton of opportunity in southern Ontario that we're not taking advantage of."

He said the stores provide Reid's Dairy with a unique model whereby it can manufacture, distribute and retail its products.

"It's giving Reid's Dairy good name recognition in Ontario."