

## **Lower Milford Township father, son to open Menchie's frozen yogurt shop in Allentown**

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By Precious Petty | The Express-Times

Rich Ryan likes Menchie's cake batter frozen yogurt sprinkled with bits of Heath toffee.

His son, Kevin Ryan, prefers cake batter swirled with red velvet cake and topped by crushed Oreos.

The Ryans, of Lower Milford Township, hope that in a few months lots of other Lehigh Valley residents will be able to name their favorite Menchie's flavors and toppings, too.

The duo are on target to launch Menchie's first Pennsylvania restaurant in Allentown this spring -- late May or early June -- and plan to open two more in the subsequent year, they said.

Based in California, Menchie's is a self-serve frozen yogurt chain that has about 150 locations nationwide, a spokeswoman said.

The Ryans are opening their 2,400-square-foot restaurant in the Shops at Cedar Point on Cedar Crest Boulevard near the South Whitehall Township border.

It will employ about 12 people and feature a party room, fireplace and outdoor seating, Kevin Ryan said.

Rich Ryan said this is an exciting time to be opening a business in the city, with the hockey arena on its way.

"There seems to be a buzz about Allentown right now. It's neat to be a part of that," he said. "I have never worked in a job where I've had more fun, where I get excited about getting up in the morning and going to work."

The Ryans are looking to put their next frozen yogurt shop in the Easton or Bethlehem areas. Dean Gumhold, an Upper Saucon Township resident who plans to open his own Menchie's in Northampton County, is working with the father and son to find locations that will maximize the impact of each eatery.

Rich Ryan first ate at Menchie's about a year ago during a visit with Kevin Ryan, who worked for AT&T in California at the time. The restaurant was packed with people, all of them smiling, employees included, Ryan recalled.

The chain's motto, "We make you smile," isn't just a gimmick, he said. "We haven't walked into one Menchie's and seen a frown."

Gumhold, a pharmacist who has always wanted to work for himself, said dealings with the folks in Menchie's corporate office constantly reaffirm his decision to open a frozen yogurt franchise.

Rich Ryan has been building custom homes for about 15 years and was looking for a way to level out his income. When Kevin Ryan, who now works with him at Ryan Elliott Custom Homes, proposed a Menchie's franchise, he didn't hesitate.

"Nothing quite turned us on like Menchie's did," Rich Ryan said.

The Ryans and Gumhold also like Menchie's commitment to the families and communities they serve. Franchisees are encouraged to get involved in school fundraisers and host family-friendly events, they said. Each of the frozen yogurt shops is meant to be a gathering place, particularly for young families.

Menchie's mascot, Menchie, has already made friends with Lehigh Valley IronPigs' mascot Ferrous, the Ryans joked. The two plan to meet up for Friday Night Fireworks on June 1 at Coca-Cola Park, where Menchie will hand out coupons.

"The kids just love the character," Kevin Ryan said of Menchie, a happy-go-lucky fro yo cone with legs

Also, a Menchie's/IronPigs backpack giveaway is planned Sept. 2, which is Back-to-School Night at the ballpark.