

Area Businesses Prepare For Start of Busy Season

Local restaurants and shops are stocking their shelves and beefing up staff to handle high volumes.

By LISA LAWSON
Daily Sun Staff Writer

While the end of summer is considered a sad event for some people, retailers in The Villages say this is their favorite time of year.

As seasonal residents start to return to the area, local retailers and restaurants are preparing by stocking extra supplies and adding members to their staffs.

Gary Bonnie, owner of GarVino's at Lake Sumter Landing, said the staff has a list of things they do to be prepared.

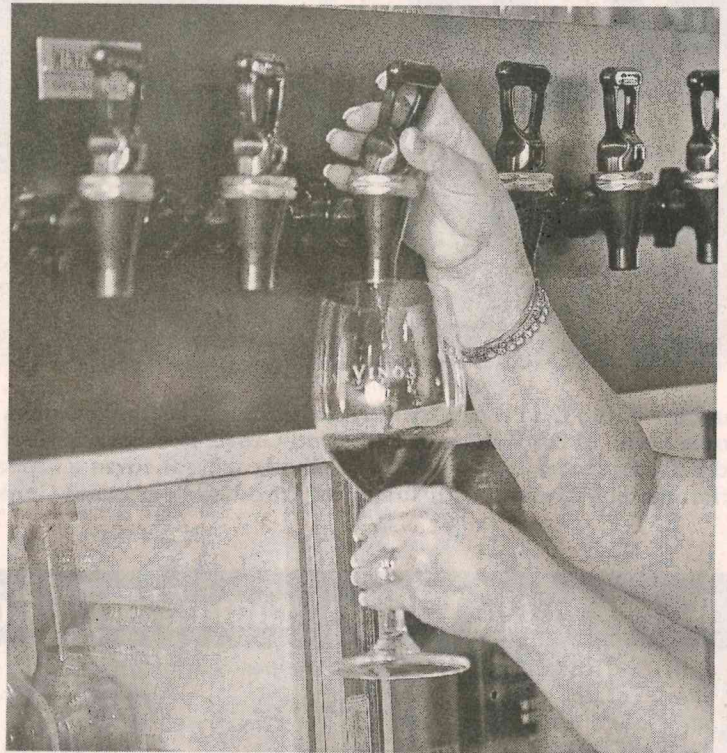
"We attend retail trade shows during the summer months to find new, unique items and also find new wine selections for the store," Bonnie said. "We also increase staff so we have sufficient coverage to ensure every customer has a great experience when visiting our business."

For most businesses, this time of the year means an increase in sales.

Carmen Maturo, store manager at Charleston Shoe Co. in Lake Sumter Landing, said it goes without saying that most businesses in Florida have a substantial increase in sales "in season."

"We absolutely hire more people due to the increase in foot traffic," Maturo said. "Typically we keep the store well stocked in order to keep our local, year-round customers well served, however, we do add a few extra units in key sizes."

Being prepared is key to



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Sandee and Gary Bonnie, the owners of GarVino's, are snowbird-season veterans. They opened their Lake Sumter Landing fine wine, cigar and gift shop nearly 12 years ago.

making things run smoothly and Christine Chaloupka, owner of Christine's in Brownwood, said her employees know what to do.

"We love the change of the season and the return of the snowbirds," Chaloupka said. "This time is the exciting time of the season right now. We have Halloween and Thanksgiving items, and soon we will be transforming to Christmas. We live for this season, and we are ready."

Carolyn Edmonson, manager of Bermuda Bay Clothing in Spanish Springs, said they deal exclusively in glamour and style and plan to be fully stocked in all sizes.

"This is our fourth year going

through a busy season and we anticipate a great season," Edmonson said. "We are going to start carrying Brighton products, which we believe will do very well."

But not all Villages businesses have been through snowbird season.

Guy Fieri's American Kitchen & Bar in Lake Sumter Landing has been open only for a couple months, and Kin Lai, the restaurant's area manager, said he isn't sure what to expect.

"We have great staff who have worked in The Villages for many years, and they are ready," Lai said. "We are excited to meet everyone and are just very happy to be in The Villages."