

NEWS OPPORTUNITY

WHEN: 2 p.m. – 4 p.m., March 6, 2009

WHERE: River Hills Restaurant, 239 West Main, Park Hills, MO 63601

WHAT: Grand Opening of the River Hills Restaurant and Commercial Kitchen.

WHO: East Missouri Action Agency (EMAA) has opened the River Hills Restaurant and Commercial Kitchen. This is a collaborative project made possible through state and federal funding as well as community partnerships. It is designed to create jobs, innovative products and new businesses in and around St. Francois, Washington and Iron Counties in Missouri.

River Hills is a fully operational restaurant serving lunch and dinner on Main Street in Park Hills. The restaurant employs economically disadvantaged individuals who are learning valuable job skills while gaining much needed work experience.

Bill Bunch, the Executive Director of EMAA, commented that, "It's really good we are able to give employment opportunities in a time when others are laying folks off. Some individuals have struggled to gain employment in the past and now they are able to learn a trade that will be transferable to other jobs in the area."

Employees are encouraged to further their education through classes offered by UniTec, and Mineral Area College. UniTec provides a certificate program in Culinary Arts. An existing partnership between UniTec and Mineral Area College allows students to obtain an advanced degree.

The shared use commercial kitchen was developed through a partnership with Southeast Missouri State University's Missouri Research Corporation and EMAA. This facility provides opportunities for community members to foster food service and hospitality related businesses.

Pat Nappier, owner of Absolute Catering & more, is a tenant of the commercial kitchen. In 2008, Nappier completed a course through Southeast Missouri State University in conjunction with the Small Business Administration enabling her to apply for a grant. She was awarded a small sum based on her business proposal. The money she received provided supplies but she was still in need of an affordable location.

After seeing an article in the Daily Journal concerning the concept of this project, Nappier contacted Keri McCrorey, Director of Community Services at EMAA, to inquire about use of the commercial kitchen. By partnering with EMAA Nappier was able to open her business with minimal start-up cost. Nappier says this has been a dream of hers for over 12 years. She likens it to an eagle taking flight; finally her dreams of small business ownership are being realized.

MEDIA ARRANGEMENTS:

You are invited to cover the Grand Opening of the River Hills Restaurant & Commercial Kitchen. The ceremony will begin with a ribbon cutting at 2 p.m. followed by hors d'oeuvres and conversation until 4 p.m. when the restaurant will open for business. Between 2:00 p.m. and 4:00 p.m. EMAA representatives, community partners, and restaurant /commercial kitchen staff will be on hand to answer questions from the news media.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT:

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