

## 2 restaurant chains coming to Clarksville

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By JIMMY SETTLE 12/15/06

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**Two** emerging restaurant chains that are big on burgers and ice cream will be introduced to Clarksville in 2007.

The first Clarksville location of the expanding Cheeseburger Charley's chain is coming to the **Two Rivers Center** by late February, with a second location targeted for the area of Exit 1 of Interstate 24 near the Great Escape movie theater by spring. The local Cheesburger Charley's franchisee, Kris Bender, also is planning to open Clarksville's first Coldstone Creamery ice cream shop next door to the Exit 1 Cheeseburger Charley's during the second quarter of next year.

Bender said he's part of an investment group that is bringing the **two** chains to town. Bender said the **Two Rivers** Cheeseburger Charley's will have an exterior store front, like Harbor Freight and Hooters.

"I like **Two Rivers** because it is located at the intersection of Riverside Drive and North Second Street, and Kraft Street, which is the fifth-busiest intersection in the state according to (Tennessee Department of Transportation) traffic counts.

"That intersection sees about 52,000 vehicles a day," said Bender, a former soldier turned real estate investor.

"Our target opening at Exit 1 is late spring of next year. We're developing that site now, and it will be beside Legends Bank near the Great Escape," he said.

Bender said he and his wife, Sgt. 1st Class Michelle Bender, who just returned from Iraq, had dined at Cheeseburger Charley's in Nashville's Green Hills Mall about three years ago. They were sold immediately.

"It was the best hamburger I'd ever eaten, and we thought how it would be great if we could find a way to bring this to Clarksville," Kris Bender said.

Working through the management of **Two Rivers**, the Benders were introduced to the ownership of Cheeseburger Charley's.

"We're actually their first franchisee," Bender said. "I made enough money in real estate investing to allow me to get involved in some franchising."

According to corporate publicity, Cheeseburger Charley's was born in 1988, when Charley "Chuck" Watkins - son of the founder of the O'Charley's casual dining chain - decided to focus on a "higher-quality, tastier and a more-distinctive hamburger."

In what Bender described as a "fast, casual" environment, Watkins allowed his customers to fix their own burgers from a condiment bar and produce display intended to rival a grocery store. He also emphasized the use of fresh, flame-broiled beef.

In 1994, he added the first vegetarian burger to the menu. Since then he has added beefalo burgers, low-cal turkey burgers, and salmon burgers.

Bender said the first Clarksville location will seat 40 to 50 people, and online and call-ahead ordering will be available, along with catering.

Also in Clarksville's future later next year is the new Coldstone Creamery at Exit 1. In its own publicity, that company says it offers "unique ice cream creations" ranging

from smoothies, to cakes and shakes, and more.

Coldstone Creamery's founders, Donald and Susan Sutherland, opened the first store in Tempe, Ariz., in 1988.

More than 1,350 stores later, the concept is still spreading nationwide.

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