

Success in Subs: Former frat brothers open a second Silver Mine location.

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After graduating from the University of Illinois in 2004, former fraternity brothers Tyler Riekema, Rich Schefflow and Ken Brenner moved to Madison to open Silver Mine Subs.

Rich Schefflow, Tyler Riekema and Ken Brenner have found success in subs. Less than four years after launching Silver Mine Subs – now a downtown staple – these co-franchisees have opened a second Madison location at the new Arbor Gate development.

“There’s less competition here than downtown,” says Schefflow of the 2601 West Beltline address. “It’s a place for people to come and feel comfortable, to sit down. Downtown we’ve got five chairs, but here it’s much bigger. We wanted to make it comfortable for people and give people some space.”

“There’s parking here, so that is great,” he continues. “I hear that this is one of the busiest roads in Southern Wisconsin, so there’s potential to reach a lot of people.”

Schefflow, 27, Riekema, 26, and Brenner, 26, are college buddies. In fact, Schefflow spent his summers working at a Silver Mine Subs outlet as a deliveryman, where he met and was inspired by the company’s founders. After graduating from University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign in 2004 (Rich and Kenny each have a degree in finance, Tyler in economics), the trio looked to collaborate on a business venture that purposefully managed to avoid a banal corporate existence.

“We all went to the same fraternity in Chicago,” says Schefflow. “And we worked at the same bars, lived together, took the same classes, and were on the same bowling and softball teams. When we were done with college, we didn’t just want to do the whole shirt-and-tie thing and work in Chicago just like everyone else. We wanted to do something out of the ordinary.”

After a visit to Madison and seeing the infinite throngs hankering for a slice at Ian’s Pizza, the guys recognized the value of catering to the unquenchable appetites of collegiate crowds. And unlike many big college cities, Madison has a sustainable, year-round population independent of its students.

“Madison seems to have the highest amount of restaurants per capita,” says Schefflow. “With the capital here as well, the city of Madison is never empty, not like Champaign, which is pretty much cornfields during the summers. In Madison, during the summers people are still here.”

The eager entrepreneurs moved to Madison in December 2004, and opened up Silver Mine Subs at 328 West Gorham Street in May 2005. Since then, Schefflow says that he's "always been on call for seven days a week, with deliveries or just about anything else that needs to be done."

Considering the stale, if not completely sour, nationwide economic trend these days, Schefflow understands that the robust implication of a second location is a noteworthy signal. It's an expansion he interprets as the endorsement of a job well done.

"The quality of the product here is something that we try to distinguish ourselves with," says Schefflow. "The food is a lot fresher, and it's worth the extra dollar or two. We actually put meat on our sandwiches here. People appreciate the quality and it brings them back."

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