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## Lane 7, J Lefty's mix bowling, food, fun

The businesses are to open in early 2009

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The billboard on Thomasville Road went up Friday and the Brunswick Corp. folks are due to arrive soon with the lanes and the hardware. The bowling, dining and entertainment business Lane 7 and its companion J Lefty's Grill and Bar are coming to Kerry Forest Parkway.

For company CEO and founder Jake Whitfield, "7" has been the lucky number over the years. For the bowler, "Lane 7" might be the best spot for a game. "It's the first thing you hear after you get your shoes — your lane assignment," he explained.

Due to open in early 2009, Lane 7 occupies a former Winn Dixie supermarket space of 40,000 square feet in the Northampton shopping center, just east of Thomasville Road. Whitfield said there will be a total of 22 lanes, including four private alleys in a separate VIP area for parties and special events.

Combining various leisure activities, including an arcade, billiards area and redemption center for prizes, Whitfield and his partners hope the entertainment business will draw area residents looking for an affordable family outing.

"We live on the northeast side of town, and we realized there are very few places for a family to get out and do things together," said investor Dr. Richard Thacker, who with wife Sherry has children ages 6 and 7. "The concept is not new, but there's nothing like it within hundreds of miles."

An osteopathic physician specializing in internal medicine, Thacker traveled the state as the former president of the Florida Osteopathic Medical Association. "I have seen this concept in action," he said. "The difference is that it is always in a metropolitan area."

Thacker agreed with Whitfield's view that such an entertainment business could work in Tallahassee. They also brought in Los Angeles-based Trifecta Management Group Inc., which will operate the business. Trifecta was developed by three former GameWorks senior executives and manages 10 similar venues across the country.

"They are second to none," Whitfield said. "I have been very pleased with the restaurants they manage and the food concepts that they have."

A lefthander and former pitcher in the Minnesota Twins organization, Whitfield intends for J Lefty's to reflect his bias in that regard, including recognition of famous lefties in art, entertainment and sports. The restaurant will serve "contemporary American" cuisine, including hand-crafted pizzas, grilled steaks and seafood, he said.

The shopping center has no shortage of eating places, including a Subway, an oriental restaurant, Coosh's Bayou Rouge, Sahara Cafe and Beef O'Brady's.

Darren Edmonds, operating partner for Beef O'Brady's, believes an anchor tenant that attracts business will help. "A bowling alley will draw a lot of traffic to this side of town," he said.

He is concerned, however, about the addition of another restaurant. "There is only so much restaurant pie to be divided up," said Edmonds, whose business has been in the plaza for eight years. "If all we are going to do is split up the pie further, then someone is going to be hurt."

Thacker said he thinks there is enough business to go around, noting that there is ready access to I-10, a good demographic in the area and the presence of nine schools within a three-mile radius. "All these factors are important," he said, adding that Brunswick helped Lane 7 with that study to determine the size facility that could be supported.

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