WineStyles store coming to town

BUSINESS WILL BE NEW VENTURE FOR OAKESONS

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A St. Paul native is looking to open a wine store in Hastings.

Dave Oakeson, 51, is selling his investment business in Brush, Colo., and plans to open WineStyles of Hastings at 537 W. Second St. with his wife, Julie. The couple's oldest son, Kyle, a Hastings College graduate, would manage the store.

The franchise opening is subject to approval of a liquor license, which the Hastings City Council will vote on during its monthly meeting at 7 p.m. Monday in the City Building, 220 N. Hastings Ave. If approved, the license request then will be forwarded to the Nebraska State Liquor Commission, which usually takes about a month to render a decision.

Oakeson said he was looking for an opportunity to move back to Nebraska when his brother, Doug, of Hastings, suggested that Dave look into opening a store in Doug's building on Second Street next to the Jimmy John's sandwich shop.

Although Dave admits he isn't exactly a wine connoisseur, he said he found his brother's invitation too inviting to ignore.

"He had this store space available, and he's familiar with the WineStyles franchise, so we looked into it from there," Dave said. "I'm going to be semi-retired, but we're going to help out at the store. Basically, we were wanting to move back home."

Dave and Julie met while studying at Wayne State College. They married in 1980. Two of their three sons played baseball for Hastings College. Kyle, 26, played right field through 2005, and Drew, 19, played left field on this year's team.

If all goes as planned, Oakeson said, he hopes to open the store in August. He will look to WineStyles' corporate training program to learn what he needs to know about the business.

"I'm learning," he said. "It is brand-new to us, no doubt about it. I've been in business myself for the last 15 years, so we like to have our own business. When you are self-employed, you can do things you want to do. Hopefully, it will be a good thing for Hastings, too."

The new franchise store will carry more than 100 different wines, including 10 to 15 varieties from Nebraska wineries. More than 80 percent of the wines carried will be private and exclusive, meaning they cannot be offered in other stores.

Founded in 2002, WineStyles operates in more than 20 states and Puerto Rico and Mexico. In Nebraska, there are currently two locations in Omaha.

If successful, Oakeson said he has already secured option rights for opening additional stores in the Tri-Cities area. For now, he'll focus on getting his Hastings store off the ground.

"We've been working on it now for about four months," he said. "We're hoping to draw from the Tri-Cities area, and if we decide to go that route with other stores, that's going to be down the road. We have to see how this first one works, first."

Markets

Friday's noon local markets

Corn 4.09
Soybeans 11.92
Milo 3.65
Wheat 6.28

Stocks of local interest

The following stocks of local interest were traded today:

	Last	Chg.
BN Santa Fe	77.02	NC
Berkshire Hathaway A	90,100	-100
Berkshire Hathaway B	2,934.10	+1.10
ConAgra	19.73	+.12
Eaton Corp.	48.52	+.64
Ingersoll Rand	22.89	+.88
Level 3	1.13	+.01
McDonald's	60.27	+.03
PepsiCo	54.65	-.17
TierOne	2.00	-.12
Tricon Global Restaurants	36.00	+.19
Union Pacific	53.91	+.59
Wells Fargo	25.36	+.26
Williams Cos.	17.26	-.04
Wal-Mart	51.11	+.24

Nation

SATURN DEAL

NEW YORK — General Motors Corp. has a tentative deal to sell its Saturn brand to former race car driver and dealership group owner Roger Penske, both companies said today.

Penske has signed a memorandum of understanding that would give his dealership chain, Penske Automotive Group, Saturn's 350 dealerships, the companies said. Penske told reporters that he expects to offer all the dealers new franchise agreements and will retain all 13,000 Saturn employees for the immediate term.

Neither Penske nor GM would say how much Penske is paying for the brand. Penske said he expects the deal to close in the third quarter.

Penske Automotive Group also distributes Daimler AG's Smart subcompacts in the U.S., but Smart has its own dealership network and Saturn dealers will continue to exclusively distribute Saturn vehicles, Penske said.

Initially, GM will continue to make cars for Saturn for two years, Penske said. But he also said he is in talks with manufacturers around the world about building Saturn cars in the future.

"We will be we'll be selling as many GM cars — as many GM-produced cars — under the Saturn brand as possible," Penske said.

The Associated Press

CHARLIE NEIBERGALL/*AP*

Liz Pickens of Reedley, Calif., looks at a Yorkshire hog Tuesday at the World Pork Expo in Des Moines, Iowa.

Pork bans baffle

SOME SPECULATE THAT FOREIGN RELUCTANCE TO ACCEPT U.S. PRODUCT IS MORE ABOUT PROTECTIONISM THAN SAFETY

LUKE MEREDITH
The Associated Press

DES MOINES, Iowa — Continued bans on U.S. pork imports by China, Russia and more than a dozen other countries have baffled government and industry officials, leading some to speculate that the issue is more about market share than health concerns.

The bans, instituted in the wake of the swine flu outbreak, cost the U.S. hog industry millions of dollars every week. And they continue despite insistence by international health officials that the pork is safe and the country's hogs are not to blame for the epidemic.

"It's politics and not science," said John Lawrence, a professor and livestock economist at Iowa State University. "The product is safe. So why restrict imports?"

From late April to late May, a reduction in hog prices that coincided with the swine flu outbreak cost U.S. producers about $81.5 million, said Steve Meyer, a livestock economist with the Paragon Economics, an Adel-based company that analyzes agricultural markets.

About 20 percent of U.S. pork is exported, and China and Russia are among the biggest buyers. Last year, China bought nearly $700 million in U.S. pork, ranking it third behind Japan and Mexico. Russia, ranked fifth with $476 million, has begun allowing some U.S. pork imports but maintains bans on 10 states.

Dave Warner, a spokesman for the Washington-based National Pork Producers Council, said U.S. producers have had long-standing disagreements with China and Russia. He believes the two countries could be using the swine flu scare to restrict imports and give a boost to their domestic hog industry.

"Both Russia and China, and all of these countries, know that this was not a food safety issue. So something else is going on there," Warner said. "It does seem like it's a kind of a convenient excuse."

Before the latest import ban, China already refused to buy any U.S. pork from hogs given the drug ractopamine, designed to produce a leaner meat. Warner said the drug has been approved for use by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration and been OK'd by 26 other countries.

China has defended its tough measures as necessary to block swine flu from the world's most populous country. China has been accused in the past of not acting quickly enough to prevent the spread of diseases, such as during the global outbreak of SARS in 2003.

Russia also has held to an earlier policy of requiring personal inspections of U.S. packing plants and storage facilities. Through that process, Russia has banned imports with little explanation from 33 U.S. pork plants, representing up to 50 percent of the export capacity to Russia, Warner said

The Russian policy violates World Trade Organization rules, but Russia isn't a member of the organization.

"In the case of Russia, they'd like to become self-sufficient in pork and chicken at some point, and so they're using this as an excuse to protect their own industry," Meyer, the livestock economist, said.

Russian officials said the ban on imports of raw pork from some U.S. states was based solely on health concerns.

"This measure has nothing to do with protectionism," said Alexei Alexeyenko, spokesman for the Russian state agricultural oversight agency Rosselkhoznadzor.

Alexeyenko said the ban does not help Russian pork producers because they lack the capacity to make up for the decrease in imported pork.

"Russia cannot meet the demand in its own market with pork produced domestically, so the accusation of protectionism sounds strange," he said. "There can be no protection of the domestic producers in this case."

He said Russia's concerns about pork are not fully dispelled by safety statements from groups such as the World Health Organization, the FDA and the U.N. Food and Agriculture Agency, because they stipulate that the pork is safe if properly cooked — but not raw.

China's Agriculture Ministry has not explained why the pork bans have not been lifted. They continue despite Agriculture Minister Sun Zhengcai stressing May 1 that swine flu had nothing to do with eating pork.

The China Daily, a state newspaper, reported last month that worries about swine flu have contributed to a collapse in pork prices, which fell 28.6 percent in April against the same month last year. Chinese officials were considering buying pork stocks to stabilize prices.

U.S. Trade Representative Ron Kirk has sent a letter to countries with import restrictions, seeking an end to the ban. On Wednesday, Kirk was headed for Russia, where the pork ban would be among the topics discussed, said his spokeswoman, Nefeterius McPherson.

Other countries with bans on U.S. pork are Ukraine, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, St. Lucia, Indonesia, Thailand, Bahrain, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Jordan, Macedonia, South Korea and Malaysia. Those nations import far less U.S. pork than China or Russia

The import bans come as domestic demand for pork has grown following a drop blamed on fears over swine flu.

The value of an average U.S. hog dropped from $128.54 on April 24, when media attention focused on the illness, to $111.76 on May 7. The price was back to about $125 by the end of May.

State fair looking to honor ag families

HASTINGS TRIBUNE
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The Nebraska State Fair and Nebraska Farm Bureau Federation once again will recognize outstanding farm and ranch families from across the state as their Ag Families of the Day.

Selected families will be honored on weekend days and on the final day of the fair, which is Labor Day. This year's fair runs Aug. 28 through Sept. 7.

The Ag Family of the Day promotion was begun in 2007. This year's 140th state fair is slated to be the last at State Fair Park in Lincoln before the event moves to Grand Island in 2010.

Any Nebraskan may nominate a farm or ranch family for the honor by submitting an online nomination or by printing a mailable form from the Ag Family program site. Forms also are available from the Farm Bureau Public Relations Department. Nominations are due June 15.

Families will be chosen based on their contributions to their community, Nebraska and agriculture. Farming or ranching must be their primary occupation. Farm Bureau membership is not a criterion for selection.

The judging panel will include representatives from Farm Bureau, the State Fair Board, fair staff and the Nebraska State Fair 1868 Foundation.

Judges will attempt to select winners from all across the state whose enterprises represent the diversity of Nebraska agriculture.

Winners will receive free gate admission to the fair, complimentary midway passes, one night's lodging in Lincoln, $100 cash, recognition at an awards program in Ag Hall at State Fair Park and a reception in their honor. They also will be featured in the daily fair parade and given candy to throw to the crowd.

Family and friends of the honorees are welcome to walk in the parade with them.

For more information, visit http://www.nebraskaagfamily.org.

Report: FDIC pushing for Citigroup shake-up

The Associated Press

NEW YORK — The Federal Deposit Insurance Corp. is pressing for a management shake-up at embattled bank Citigroup Inc., putting CEO Vikram Pandit in the hot seat, a report said today.

The report from The Wall Street Journal cited people familiar with the matter.

"We are confident in our management and confident that we will continue to position Citi for a return to sustained profitability," said Chairman Richard Parsons in a statement e-mailed to The Associated Press.

A representative of the FDIC was not immediately available to comment.

Citigroup has been one of the most troubled banks throughout the financial crisis. Investors have long criticized its board and management for allowing the bank to make big investments in the risky housing market — actions that led to Citigroup reporting billions in losses.

Citigroup has already received $45 billion in government rescue funds, and a portion of that will soon be converted into common shares, making the Treasury Department its largest shareholder.

In May, the government determined that it would need to raise an additional $5.5 billion as a buffer against future losses.

"We went through a rigorous stress test process, the results of which were agreed to by appropriate regulatory agencies and clearly reflect the significant progress made by this management team over the last 15 months to turn Citi around," Parsons said.