



December 4, 2008

Frozen yogurt franchise looks to open in Tier

Executive: Region 'ideal market' for dessert shop

*By Debbie Swartz
Staff Writer*

Yogen Fruz, an international frozen yogurt company, wants to open its first Binghamton franchise by the end of 2009, Upstate New York Master Franchisee George Traikos said.

"My objective is to open 100 stores in five years," he said.

Traikos, president of YF of Upstate New York Inc., opened his first Yogen Fruz franchise in the Eastview Mall near Rochester in November.

"We're starting in Rochester and rolling out from here," he said.

Within the next six months, he said he plans to have stores in Syracuse and Buffalo. Six to 12 months later, he plans to open stores in Binghamton, Utica and Watertown. He doesn't have a specific Binghamton site in mind.

The stores will vary in size, with some as small as 100 square feet and others up to 1,500 square feet, Traikos said. Ideally, he'd like the stores to be between 400 square feet and 600 square feet. The determining factor is available space for rent.

Most stores will be located in indoor shopping malls, Traikos said, because they offer customers year-round climate control. But he'd also like to see stores eventually open at sports venues and college campuses.

The number of employees at each store will vary depending on the size of the store and its customer base, he said. The Rochester facility has 10 employees -- primarily part-time workers -- and needs two more.

Traikos said he first became aware of Yogen Fruz while on business in Rochester. He was a Florida-based developer at the time and read an article in Business Week magazine about the franchise.

Yogen Fruz started in Toronto in 1986. There are now 1,100 locations in 20 countries, according to the company.

The store's menu features dairy smoothies and frozen yogurt -- including low-fat, non-fat and no-sugar-added -- and a variety of flash-frozen fruit, which are custom blended for each customer, the company said.

"Upstate New York is the ideal market for Yogen Fruz to sell its healthy brand of dessert," company President Aaron Serruya said. "Demographic studies indicate that upstate New York has an above-average tendency towards health consciousness."
