

## New owners, but same feel at Lily's

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It might be difficult for patrons at Lily's Grill & Malt Shop to tell the difference, but the Main Street restaurant is now under new management.

The business formally switched hands on Sept. 2, when the Buettner family took the reins from Chris and Jennifer Cosgrove, who put the restaurant up for sale this summer to pursue a business opportunity in Florida. The Buettners declined to disclose the purchase price, but they said it was less than the \$375,000 the Cosgroves had initially sought for the shop, located at 131 Main St. S.

Seated on the restaurant's back patio Sunday morning with their sons Blue, 8, and Gus, 6, Stillwater residents Cory and Naashom Buettner said they had been looking for an opportunity to enter the restaurant business, and Lily's was a perfect fit.

"I've been in the restaurant industry for 10 years, and I've always been on the lookout for a place. I stayed home with by boys during the day and then worked at night as a waiter, but once Gus went to school, that freed me up to move into management," recalled Cory Buettner, who had previously worked at the Dock Caf/ in Stillwater and the Porterhouse Steak & Seafood Grill in Little Canada.

"When I heard that Chris and Jen were looking to sell, we started talking about it. After a number of meetings, we decided we were ready to jump in," he said.

"It was just such a great opportunity that we were able to find (a restaurant) right here in Stillwater, in the community that we love," added Naashom, who is a special education teacher at Stillwater Junior High School.

Buettner, 38, said he has been blessed to walk into an operation that is already successful, and he doesn't plan to make any dramatic changes right away.

"The staff has been the greatest inheritance that we've had," he said. "We just have such a wonderful staff, all the way from Manager Bonny Johnson-Brown, who has been here for seven or eight years, on down to server assistants who started less than five months ago. That's made everything so much easier."

Still, Buettner is already planning some improvements he hopes will further distinguish Lily's from its fast-food competitors - especially since the Stillwater Dairy Queen franchise is expected to reopen across the street within a few months.

"We're not going to throw the baby out with the bathwater, to use an old expression, but we'd like to change things up a little bit. We want to be exceptionally good at our burgers and our malts, which are really our specialty," he said.

Also, the Buettners plan to place more emphasis on the restaurant's patio, which they said effectively doubles the establishment's capacity on warm days. Also in the works is a likely name change.

Speaking over the din of passing traffic, the couple said they look forward to the day when a new Highway 36 bridge is built and the Stillwater Lift Bridge is limited to pedestrian use.



Gazette photo by Andrew Wallmeyer  
The Buettner family takes a seat in the shade Sunday afternoon on the back patio of Lily's Grill & Malt Shop, which they bought from the Chris and Jennifer Cosgrove on Sept. 2. From left are, Cory, Gus, Blue and Naashom.

"We're optimistic that it will help us, especially with a walking pier a block away. If Chestnut turns into a more pedestrian-friendly street, I think that will only help our business," Cory Buettner said.

With the bridge project tentatively slated for 2013, there's a good chance their sons Blue and Gus will be ready to wait tables by the time that happens.

In the meantime, the boys said they will be content to help by occasionally sweeping up and taste-testing new malts and menu items.

"I like it, because we get to come here after school a lot," said Blue, a third-grader at Oak Park Elementary. "We usually just hang out on the patio. It's fun."

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