

October 26, 2006 Issue

Chiropractor owner of Kildare's Pubs has real backbone

by LEN LEAR

Dave Magrogan's American Dream life has been almost too good to be true. Dave, just 32 now, grew up in an Irish Catholic working class household in Brookhaven, Delaware County. Starting at age 15, he worked after school washing dishes in the kitchen of the Lobster Pot in Media. He continued working his way through college and graduate school by waiting on tables, bartending, even doing some cooking and managing in restaurants.

After graduating with a pre-med degree from West Chester University, Dave attended and graduated from the Chiropractic from Life University in Atlanta. But Dave, who had become hooked on the restaurant business, still had a dream to open an Irish pub. "I would sit for hours planning events and promotions for my imaginary pub," he recalls.

Thus, whenever Dave was not doing spinal adjustments, he was making adjustments to his bank account so he could afford to open his own Irish pub. His dream finally came to fruition on May 9, 2003, when he opened Kildare's Irish Pub in West Chester. "We were still hammering nails as people poured in the newly painted doors," said Magrogan. "I had hoped to do \$1.7 million in sales the first year, but we wound up doing \$3.5 million in sales."

In recent years Irish pubs have been popping up like tulips in April. I even know of one restaurant/bar in the city that is owned by Italian-Americans, but it has an Irish surname in the name of the restaurant. "When we changed to an Irish name, our business increased dramatically," the owner told me, "even though everything else remained the same. That's because there is a certain magic about an Irish pub. It is synonymous with having a good time."



Dave Magrogan is a true American Dream story, a working class guy turned chiropractor turned restaurant entrepreneur, all by the age of 32.



They even have a road sign at Kildare's in Manayunk pointing you in the right direction (if you want to go to another Kildare's).

In the case of Magrogan, who is thoroughly Irish-American, he hired an Irish pub design company in Dublin to design Kildare's. He imported the mahogany woods and almost every other part of the Kildare's interior from Ireland; even the painters who painted the restaurant were Irish, as are the musicians, food, beer and whiskey. Magrogan even sent his chef to Ireland to be trained by famed Irish chef, Kevin Dundon, and he sent his managers to the Emerald Isle to learn all about Guinness beer — how it is made, how it should be served, how to clean the glassware.

Since his phenomenal success in West Chester, Magrogan has opened four other Kildare's — at 509 S. 2nd St. in center city's Headhouse Square, at 4417 Main St. in Manayunk, in Media's Granite Run Mall and in King of Prussia. "Our plans," said Magrogan, "are to open 45 more Kildare's in the next five to seven years." (As if running

all of the Kildare's pubs didn't keep him busy enough, Dave is also co-owner and president of Two Men and a Truck, a nationally franchised moving company based in Delaware County.)

We checked out Kildare's in Manayunk recently and found the food to be more sophisticated than you might expect. Entrees of goat cheese-encrusted salmon and baked tilapia stuffed with crabmeat (\$16.95 each) were quite good, as were desserts of chocolate Jameson torte and butterscotch cheesecake (\$6.95 each). And the Irish pub mustard that is placed on every table is great on just about everything. (The manager — from Ireland, of course — is Anthony McCormack, a great guy from County Cork who previously worked all over the world on a cruise ship.)

And there is a vast selection of draft and bottled beers, cocktails and Irish whiskeys. I counted 16 different Irish whiskeys offered, as well as 18 Irish cocktails, seven different types of Irish coffee (or you can create your own with any kind of Irish whiskey), eight Irish martinis, nine types of Guinness on draft, 21 other types of draft beer, 39 different premium beers by the bottle and at least a dozen domestic beers by the bottle. There are also fruity Belgian beers and, of course, wine. (But ordering wine at Kildare's would be like going to an ice cream parlor that offers 36 different flavors of ice cream and ordering vanilla.)

What impresses me the most, however, is that Magrogan believes in giving back. Last year he gave \$100,000 to the American Red Cross for Katrina relief; he also sent two truckloads of supplies to Katrina victims and held major fundraisers for other worthwhile causes. For more information, call the Manayunk Kildare's at 215-482-7242.