

Dairy Queen opens March 24 by new owners

LACONIA — The suspense is over, and the long-awaited day is near. After 21 years of outstanding and tasty service to their customers and community, Michael and Michelle Merrill recently handed over the keys and cones at Dairy Queen on Union Avenue in Laconia to Mariluz and Brian Flanders. “It was important to us with all the local support and growth that we experienced throughout our years that we keep it locally owned and operated,” stated the Merrills. “We’ll be staying on short term with the transition of getting the store ready to open for the 2022 season,” they added. Opening day is planned for Thursday, March 24.

Flanders, residents of Gilford for the past 10 years, are excited to continue the tradition of quality products and great customer service. “We look forward to maintaining the high standards of customer service and commitment to the community that the Merrills established,” said Mariluz Flanders. “We have seen the benefits community programs, including sports, have had in our own children’s lives and feel it is important for us to give back. This business will afford us opportunities to do that,” she continued. The Flanders have three children: two sons, Anthony and Andrew, who are both currently volunteering for their church in Colombia and Chile, and a daughter, Vanessa, who is a junior at Gilford High School. They are a very sports-minded family whose children have excelled in basketball, soccer, and golf.

Not new to the Lakes Region business community, Brian Flanders has owned Eased Edges, a Court Street hearth and outdoor living retail store he established 18 years ago and which he will continue to operate. Mariluz Flanders, who will take over the helm at Dairy

Queen, brings extensive customer service and finance experience, most recently serving in various positions and achieving Employee of the Year with Bank of New Hampshire at their Pleasant Street offices.

As an ownership requirement, the Flanders recently returned from three weeks of intensive Dairy Queen management and operational training held in the Bahamas. “It was the only training location available; I promise!” chuckled Mariluz. While they did sneak in a few moments of enjoying the warm weather there, most of their time was spent working and learning at a corporate approved training site, one of six different Dairy Queen locations in the Bahamas. “In addition to the many corporate policies and procedures we learned, we both donned aprons and learned the secrets of making all these delicious treats, including how not to get soaked when cleaning the Blizzard machine,” laughed Brian Flanders.

In preparation for opening day, a job fair was held last Saturday. “We had a great response from many looking to join our team,” stated Mariluz Flanders, noting that they will need approximately 20 workers. Brian Flanders added that they will also be carrying over many of the great staff who worked there previously. “DQ is a popular place and I know we will be very busy. We will be doing our best and just ask for a little patience as we get into the groove of running this fun business!” laughed Mariluz.

The business sales transaction was handled through New Hampshire Business Sales. Laconia’s Dairy Queen that was first built in 1972. In 2001 the Merrills purchased the business and transformed it from the original barn-style building to a more modern facility with a drive-up window option.



New and former DQ owners work together to make the transition of ownership as seamless and smooth as possible. From left to right: New owners Mariluz & Brian Flanders, previous owners Michael & Michelle Merrill. (Courtesy photo)

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