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Friday, 25 September 2020 05:18





As the owner of several businesses across Gallup, Morgan Newsom is no stranger to serving people. Whether it is at R&M Furniture, 1985 Hwy. 602, or The 505 Burgers & Wings, 1982 Hwy. 602, he is always looking to provide the goods that people are looking for.

The *Sun* is happy to feature Newsom as a Gallup Sun Star, and met with him on Sept. 16 to speak about his life and career in Gallup.

BACKGROUND

Newsom said he has been in Gallup for nearly 50 years now.

“I’m originally from the Dakotas. My parents brought me down here, and my dad was selling sewing machines to all the boarding schools,” Newsom said. “From there, he got into the furniture business and then after I finished high school, I got into the furniture business. I’ve been in the furniture business for about 38 years.”

The gap between high school and starting work at a furniture shop was filled by a job at the local mines, which ended when they were shut down, he added.

While he has been in the furniture business since 1982, Newsom added another store to his résumé in November 2010: a restaurant. Specifically, The 505 Burgers & Wings, which is right next door to R&M Furniture.

“It was through a magazine that I bought [where I had the idea], and there was this space in this shopping center I owned through my company, Newsom Rentals,” Newsom said. “I thought if that space becomes available again, I’m going to take it and use it. It became available, and so I started the restaurant and it’s been going ever since.”

Newsom said he had no prior restaurant experience, outside of being a customer in one.

“It is a learning experience, every day in the restaurant business,” he said, describing how each work day goes. “The days start very early, and they go very late. We’ve got about 25 employees between all three companies and we just keep things going from there.”

He added Newsom Rentals is his property company that owns the shopping center where R&M Furniture and The 505 Burgers & Wings are located, in addition to the Six Directions Indigenous School, 2055 Hwy. 602.

ADJUSTING TO NEW LIFE

In the past six months since the COVID-19 pandemic was declared, life was upended for people and businesses. Owners have had to adjust to what has been dubbed “the new normal” with heightened safety measures.

“I don’t know if it’s a new normal, but more of a different situation that everybody has to adapt to,” Newsom said. “Whether you’re in a furniture or restaurant business, there’s changes in everything. It’s been a life experience, and we just have to do it.”

As a result of the increased precautions, restaurant customers became more dependent on takeout or drive-thru food if they wanted food prepared for them.

Some restaurants have offered delivery through the pandemic, but this has either been in places that have always had it such as pizza restaurants, or through third-party services that could stack multiple fees on top of a single order.

After witnessing and wondering about a vehicle that had delivered food to his home, Newsom took this opportunity to add delivery services to the restaurant.

Newsom said the restaurant acquired a car in August and had it outfitted to be a dedicated delivery vehicle, equipped with an insulated box to keep the customers’ food warm while in transit, ensuring it is only used for delivery purposes.

“That’s part of the new normal, where restaurants are going to have to start delivering,” he said. “I figured we’re doing a good service by doing it ourselves.”

The vehicle is used to deliver food for both The 505 Burgers & Wings and Mama's Kitchen, 820 W. Maloney Ave., which is owned by Newsom's sister, Lynn Newsom-Silva.

The delivery driver, George Smith, spoke about starting to deliver food to customers.

"It's new to me because I've never done delivery before, but I'm glad we're able to provide it for customers that aren't able to get out," Smith said. "It's nice to have local restaurants that are known for their food, to be able to deliver food from breakfast to dinner to people's houses."

Smith said the reception to restaurant delivery has been positive.

"Most of them are so appreciative," he said. "They're liking food, something other than pizza, being brought to their house."

Newsom also said the customers have been liking the delivery services so far.

"It gets better and stronger every day," he said. "I've also heard people come to me and say they like that the vehicle is used only for delivery and it's outfitted for that. By doing delivery ourselves, we can get the food to people faster, warmer, and safer."

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