

Grand Prairie welcoming food, entertainment venue

Jillian's plans opening in former linen store within a few months

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PEORIA — Jillian's, a growing national retailer that combines food and entertainment for all ages, will open in a few months at The Shoppes at Grand Prairie, the mall developer said Wednesday.

Hitting on a trend that puts entertainment venues in mall-type centers with shopping and eating to give patrons a more balanced offering, Jillian's will create 70 or more jobs in the 28,000-square-foot space once occupied by Linens N Things.

Jillian's "Eat, Drink and Play" concept, also popularized by chains such as ESPN Zone and Dave and Busters, will open there in late 2009 or early 2010, said Kathleen Cullinan-Brill of Cullinan Properties Ltd., developer and manager of The Shoppes at Grand Prairie.

"We believe this will be a huge tourist draw for Peoria, drawing from the 30-county, 1.7 million-people area The Shoppes draw from, as well. That's why Jillian's chose to locate here," Cullinan-Brill said.

"For us, we couldn't be more excited because now we can give people another reason to come here. There is now going to be more to do in The Shoppes area instead of just dinner and a movie."

She said it will be the only Jillian's between Chicago and St. Louis.

Jillian's is based in Louisville, Ky., and has stores in only 11 other cities, including Indianapolis, San Francisco, Seattle, Charlotte and Cleveland.

The store has the Video Cafe, with big screen TVs for sports viewing; the 9-Ball Lounge, with tournament-quality billiard tables; a games room with electronic and simulation games; an eight-lane multi-media bowling alley; and nightclub entertainment. It will be able to accommodate parties of 2,000 or more people, with conference rooms for business meetings.

It will offer a venue for families but also some areas, with later hours, for adults.

"The trend of putting entertainment venues in shopping centers has grown, especially in the down economy, and so has the concept of staycations, where families vacation closer to home rather than by taking trips. This will play into that trend very well," Cullinan-Brill said.

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