



PRESS RELEASE
February 20, 2014

JEDCO Announces Groundbreaking of Wellness Center in Fat City *Fat City continues to attract new business to the area*

(METAIRIE, La) -- The [Jefferson Parish Economic Development Commission \(JEDCO\)](#) is pleased to announce the groundbreaking of a multimillion dollar wellness facility in Fat City. JEDCO joined Parish President John Young, District 5 Councilwoman Cynthia Lee-Sheng and owners of Chronos Body, Health and Wellness to welcome the company to the Fat City community.

Once completed, Chronos Body, Health & Wellness will be a full-service wellness center that provides all services in a single complex. The 13,000-square-foot facility was purchased in February 2013 and is currently undergoing an extensive renovation. Of the \$4 million dollar project, JEDCO financed over \$1.6 million of it for equipment, working capital and real estate costs.

The shared vision of Dr. Mace Scott and Dr. Miguel Aguilera, along with partner Dr. John Higginbotham, Chronos breathes new life into Fat City. For years, JEDCO has worked with the [Jefferson Parish Council and Administration](#) to redevelop Fat City. Through The Jefferson EDGE, a long-term strategic plan to improve economic viability, Fat City was identified as an area with high potential to positively impact Jefferson's continued prosperity. Over the years, the parish has seen an increase of new, high-quality businesses to Fat City, a sign of successful revitalization.

"We are thrilled to see this project come to fruition," says Jerry Bologna, the executive director of JEDCO. "JEDCO identified Fat City as an area of focus and revitalization many years ago and we have worked in coordination with the Jefferson Parish Council and Administration to improve the area through economic development projects. Not only are we excited to participate in this exciting event, but we are also pleased to have played a role in the financing of this project. The groundbreaking of Chronos Body, Health and Wellness is indicative of the shift within the Fat City community to welcome high quality businesses to the area. We look forward to watching Chronos achieve success in Jefferson Parish and we will offer our resources every step of the way."

"We are delighted to welcome Chronos Body, Health & Wellness to Jefferson Parish and look forward to its contribution to the continued revitalization of Fat City. This unique wellness center concept is the first of its kind in the greater New Orleans area and we are proud Chronos chose to make this significant investment here in Jefferson Parish," adds Jefferson Parish President John Young.

"I am so very excited about the new body, health and wellness facility under construction in Fat City. The owners' decision to purchase, invest, renovate and revitalize an existing, partially vacant building, is the key to changing Fat City into a bustling and vibrant neighborhood once again," says

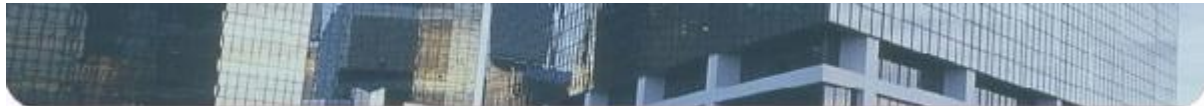
Jefferson Parish Councilwoman (District 5) Cynthia Lee-Sheng. "This year is starting out strong for us and with the groundbreaking of Chronos Body, Health & Wellness we continue to make great strides in seeing this neighborhood change right before our eyes. The concept of beauty, health and wellness - all under one roof - is so innovative and we are proud that the owners chose to deliver these services right here in Fat City."

Chronos will offer a wide array of services to meet the needs of its customers. Not only will Chronos house a 24-hour fitness center, but it will also provide physician-supervised, non-surgical cosmetic services, weight loss management services and spa/salon services. The facility, located at 3200 N. Arnoult Road, is slated to open in June 2014.

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MEDIA ADVISORY
February 19, 2014

Full-Service Wellness Center Planned for Fat City Revitalization
Unique wellness center concept is first for Greater New Orleans

(METAIRIE, La) -- The Jefferson Parish Economic Development Commission (JEDCO) is pleased to announce a major economic development project in Fat City. Chronos Body, Health and Wellness will host a groundbreaking ceremony in Fat City Thursday morning. This full-service fitness center, spa and medi-spa offers a unique wellness center concept new to the Greater New Orleans area. Purchased in February 2013, the 21,000 square-foot facility will provide a broad scope of amenities to its patrons, including a 24-hour fitness center, weight loss management and a full array of spa and salon services. Chronos is one of several new businesses choosing to locate in Fat City, part of a long-term effort to revitalize the area. JEDCO assisted in the financing of this multimillion dollar project.

WHEN: Thursday, February 20, 2014
10 AM

WHERE: The future site of Chronos Body, Health & Wellness
3200 N. Arnoult Road
Metairie, La

WHO: Chronos Partners, Dr. Mace Scott, Dr. Miguel Aguilera & Dr. John Higginbotham
Jefferson Parish President John Young
Jefferson Parish Councilwoman Cynthia Lee-Sheng (District 5)
JEDCO

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Fat City transforming with wellness, fitness centers moving in

Published 5:15 PM CST Feb 20, 2014

METAIRIE, La. —Fat City in Metairie is transforming month by month. After new zoning laws went into effect several years ago, a number of adult-oriented businesses were forced out. Now a multimillion-dollar investment is being made into the area as it continues down a road to revitalization.

Gone are the days of late nights at Fat City barrooms and strip clubs. Within the year wellness and fitness will take center stage at the Chronos Body, Health and Wellness Center.

"You can come, work out, shower, get a massage, meet with any of our physicians. We're going to be doing physician supervised weight loss, in coordination with our personal trainers, get your nails and hair done," said Miguel Aguilera, one of two medical directors.

Dr. Mace Scott and Dr. Miguel Aguilera, along with partner Dr. John Higginbotham are investing millions into renovating a more than 50-year-old building in Fat City. Jefferson Parish Economic Development Commission (JEDCO) financed more than \$1.6 million of the \$4 million project for equipment, working capital and real estate costs.

"We were looking for somewhere that was going to be up and coming, somewhere that we could be a part of the community, and we really liked Councilwoman Cynthia Lee Sheng's vision for the area," Aguilera said.

More than three years ago, Sheng pushed for stricter zoning in Fat City to flush out adult-oriented businesses in hopes of drawing new investors. Sheng said it's been a big battle with even bigger victories along the way.

"It's a tree being planted was a victory, and it was the crime stats going down was a victory, and we're just fighting this fight on all fronts but today, you push us forward in a big big way," Sheng said at a ceremonial ribbon cutting Thursday.

As this area continues to develop it's bringing with it more traffic and developers are expecting to have some growing pains.

"That's been a concern for some of the other developers here. Parking has been a little difficult, but we're all hopeful we'll be able to come up with a solution," Aguilera said, "We'll do what we need to for our clients even if we have to do a free valet service."

Sheng said it's a good problem to have with more businesses expected to announce their openings in the near future.

"I think when we look at trying to redevelop an area, you always want the first big project and then people will follow and I think now, especially in the last couple months you see us moving to that point," she said.

At the end of 2013 five new restaurants took up shop in Fat City. Chronos Body, Health and Wellness Center is expecting to open in July. Sheng said other developers are working with the planning department to develop in Fat City, although she wouldn't give specifics.



Fat City in 2014: A turning point for Metairie's former nightlife district?

[Print](#)



By [Adriane Quinlan, NOLA.com](#) | [The Times-Picayune](#)

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on February 20, 2014 at 9:00 AM, updated February 20, 2014 at 1:12 PM

one can make 500 bucks hauling scrap. That's why, on a recent Thursday, Dewayne Clark and Stanley Smith stood across from a low, stucco building that used to be a bar named Uncle Larry's Lounge, now nothing more than a shell. Inside, workers were peeling down drywall. Cables hung from the ceiling. Scrap ended up in Smith's truck.

The scene at **18th Street and Edenborn Avenue** was distant from what Smith, 56, remembered here: flash, funk, a good time, young single adults hanging around the apartment swimming pool by day and partying deep into the night. "In the '70s, everything was the disco scene," he said, munching on potato chips. "Neighbors would leave the door open. Man, it used to be fun."

Now, Smith is erasing **that history** one scrap load at a time. Fat City is quieter, its storefronts darker. There is an empty feeling, maybe a feeling that something is about to change, the pause before the bang.

Dana Pecoraro thinks that empty feeling comes partly from Fat City's blank walls. The advertising executive carries a careful binder of three-hole-punched photographs of walls, walls, walls: a white concrete wall behind a spa, another behind a sushi restaurant, the brown wall of a storage facility. A Fat City business owner and a member of the non-profit neighborhood group hoping to spur change, **Fat City Friends Inc.**, Pecoraro has snapped these walls while scouting potential locations for the group's upcoming mural-painting project, an effort to bring color to what she calls the "concrete jungle." In the next 60 days, the group also hopes to plant 80 holly trees.

"It's a blank canvas," Pecoraro said. "We're hoping it will at least soften the area."

The shifts

In 2014, Fat City is softening. Once a swinging nightlife hub, Fat City offered an alternative to the French Quarter. Its clientele: the denizens of **Metairie**'s popular apartment buildings and New Orleanians looking for a change of pace. Development was quick, businesses turned over fast and the streets were full. In 1974, a States-Item headline read, "Fat City is booming, baby."

JOIN LIVE CHAT



To discuss Fat City, join reporter Adriane Quinlan in the comments below this story Thursday at 9:30 a.m. Return Friday at 10 a.m. to chat with Parish Councilwoman **Cynthia Lee-Sheng**.

That was the climax. Signal the decline: Strip clubs replaced nightclubs, prostitutes followed the tide and businesses begged for attention with loud, teetering signs in the criss-cross of overhead power lines.

A series of studies peered into the knot of Fat City. A **1983 report**, paid for by Jefferson Parish, declared that Fat City had died with disco. A **2009 study** by the Jefferson

Economic Development Commission blamed decades of inaction on a recalcitrant neighborhood that had "stubbornly frustrated" plans so far.

Enter **Councilwoman** Cynthia Lee-Sheng, who at the start of her term began spending evenings in Fat City, driving around, sitting in her car, watching. What she saw surprised her: Drunks, kicked out of bars for being unruly, stumbled in the streets. Perusing police reports, Lee-Sheng said, she saw the same crime over and over again: drunken fights on the sidewalks between bar patrons, who used broken beer bottles as weapons.

Lee-Sheng could understand why upscale businesses would not want to open in Fat City. To promote change, she considered what she saw as the underlying problem: the late night barrooms. "I felt like I can't in good faith go out there and tell the public 'I believe this could happen', when I really know, unless we can handle this problem with the bars, it's never going to happen," she said. "I didn't want to be a liar about it."

Lee-Sheng re-instated a committee to evaluate whether businesses with liquor licenses could keep them, and she pursued **an ambitious overhaul** to the area's zoning ordinance. The new law was as thick as an airport novel. It was designed to sweep Fat City into the trend of "new urbanism," a retro-fitting of United States suburbs into pedestrian-friendly town centers, similar to the main streets of yesteryear. It included changes to how businesses advertise themselves with signs, how they keep up their greenery and how far new buildings must be set back from the sidewalks.

A tour of Fat City changes A snapshot of Fat City in 2014: new trees and restaurants pop up while the hood's stalwarts stay firmly planted.

But it was a just few paragraphs setting regulations on Fat City's nightlife, that drew the most vocal opposition. The ordinance called for gradually phasing out "adult uses" such as strip clubs and clamping down on when barrooms could stay open, cutting off drinkers most nights at midnight, on others at 1 a.m.

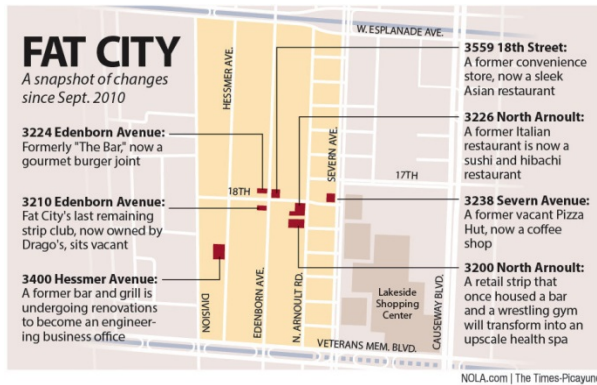
Bar owners spoke in full force against limiting their hours, and Lee-Sheng said that affected her. "I had a lot of sleepless nights," she said. "You knew you were going to harm businesses, and that's not what you think politicians want to do."

Businesses that made their living between midnight and 4 a.m. have since shuttered. In 2010, 22 bars were operating in Fat City. In 2014, there are seven.

Meanwhile, crime has fallen. From 2010 to 2012, the number of calls to the Sheriff's Office for service within a half mile of 3200 Edensborn, at the center of Fat City, fell 68 percent according to the agency's Crime Tracker data. Reports of suspicious persons and of theft have dropped steadily since 2010.

And since September 2010, when the Parish Council approved the Fat City rezoning ordinance, 38 permits have been issued to businesses undergoing everything from a light renovation to a total overhaul.

One such renovation transformed Salvatore's, a traditional Italian restaurant that hosted an evening dance crowd, into a sleek Japanese eatery: **Akira Sushi and Hibachi Grill**. Ruddy, red floors have been exchanged in favor of hospital-clean white tiles. Grills here have a special feature: They are smokeless. "Women can wear a nice dress, and they won't smell like smoke," manager Lily Chen said. "We don't want them to feel greasy."



Down the block, the grease is being scrubbed out of 3200 N. Arnould. Today, officials are holding a ground breaking for a multi-million-dollar, high-end spa. Developers call it the "first full-service wellness center" in the New Orleans area, to include a 24-hour gymnasium, a medi-spa and a salon. It will rise on the site of a retail

strip that housed a martial arts gym and a bar found to have violated its alcoholic beverage permit. The new business will go by the name Chronos Body Health & Wellness.

Perhaps that's a symbol of Fat City's changes. Chronos was the Greek god of time, often figured with a clock in one hand and a scythe in the other.

'A critical mass'

To **Jefferson Parish** Planning Director Terri Wilkinson, the new spa signals a turning point, perhaps what planners had been hoping would land in Fat City: a high-end business that will draw more of its kind. "I do see it as a milestone," Wilkinson said. "It's starting to feel like we've hit a - I don't know - a critical mass, maybe. Like this is that one. We've been through those initial projects, and we've hit a point where we're starting to get a critical mass of redevelopment projects."

Where there was once a fight to force change in Fat City, now the ball is rolling, said Michael Hecht, president and chief executive of Greater New Orleans Inc. "We are pleased by the momentum," Hecht said. "Whereas two years ago, there were a lot of questions about whether revitalizing Fat City made sense, the questions that we're getting today are, 'How is it going?' And so there's been a shift in perspective: from questioning, to anticipating. That shows that the idea of a new Fat City, and a new town center, has been socialized and accepted."

On 18th Street, in a former Circle K convenience store, is **another sleek Asian fusion restaurant**. It's a trend that Hecht chalks up to "agglomeration," when like businesses follow like.

Ohana has on its menu a "Hot, Sexy roll," named so for its jalapenos and wasabi, but everything here is "family-friendly," said co-owner PeiPei Yan. Ohana translates to "family" in Hawaiian. On a weekday evening, Yan hugged a customer who walked in the door. On the television, "American Idol" was playing.

When you have a location like Fat City, you need to make some changes to create a better environment." -- Morgan Stewart, restaurant customer.

Yan said she and her husband, Richard Chen, opted to open the restaurant at this location because of reports that the neighborhood was changing. "I heard it was a very good city, made very friendly now," Yan said. "We can bring our business here, and make it even more friendly than before."

Morgan Stewart, eating with his family at a booth in the back, said that they love the changes they have seen in Fat City. "I'm a free market guy, but I understand, when you have a location like Fat City you need to make some changes to create a better

environment," Stewart said. "A lot of people might not like it. But the markets respond in a way that allows my family to have a nice dinner."

And they did. "The food's great," he said.

Some unimpressed

But what are Chris Hickman and Leanna Stewart supposed to do with family-friendly Japanese restaurants? Stewart grew up here, moved away and is back in Fat City, to save money by living with Stewart's mother, who receives disability assistance for her apartment. Jobless, at the moment, there is not much for the couple to do in Fat City. Without the old bars, Stewart said, "Nobody has anywhere to go to air their bull--- out."

Which is why on a recent afternoon they were simply sitting on the corner of Edenborn and 18th, watching traffic. Under one of Hickman's feet was regular, old concrete sidewalk. Under the other was the new faux cobblestone walk, which the parish had laid down over drainage improvements to create a "sense of place," part of the "pedestrianization" of an area once designed for drivers.

To Hickman, the change is useless, funny. When he wheels his groceries back to the apartment, his teeth sometimes chatter. "I'm trying to roll groceries in my little cart, and I'm bumping everywhere," he said, smiling. "It looks good. But kids want to skateboard."

Across the street at **Pat's Pub**, a friendly dive open for 17 years and not going anywhere soon, a regular who called himself Peedi laughed at the new cobblestone walks, the new streetlights and colorful hanging banners of Fat City's "pedestrian core." "They put a few little pretty street lights and pretty signs," he said. "I don't see a difference from 15 years ago to today."

To others, the changes in Fat City go deeper. "I do believe that when an area is more walkable and bike-friendly that is a quality of life issue," said Maggie Woodruff, a planner with **the Regional Planning Commission**, which is seeking ways to open Fat City to pedestrians. The commission recently wrapped a **study on Fat City's eastern border, Severn Avenue**, which called for an estimated \$7.6 million in construction work to install greenery and wider sidewalks, with the goal of growing a

pedestrian corridor that could entice shoppers to wander west into Fat City from Lakeside Shopping Center.

"It's not all that enticing at the moment," Woodruff said. "You want the connection, and the ability for the attractiveness to walk across the street." On Wednesday, the Parish Council voted to push the study into the design phase, ensuring the project is on track to break ground in 2015, Woodruff said.

As Tommy Cvitanovich, who runs the Fat City institution **Drago's Seafood Restaurant**, described it, the area could benefit from its connection to the mall if Severn, and other thoroughfares, are improved. "One of two things is going to happen," Cvitanovich said. "The really good stuff that's happening around Lakeside will spread through Fat City, or the uglies in Fat City are going to spread to Lakeside. We need to do whatever we can to make the good, as opposed to the ugly."

Pecoraro, the Fat City Friends activist, said the changes run deeper than putting lipstick on a pig. "The changes are already occurring. We're just following suit," she said. "I happen to believe if your neighbor is clearing up her yard, you'll clean up your yard too."

The apartments

In 2010, before the rezoning ordinance passed, some Fat City **bar owners speaking against the changes** argued that the area's crime came not from the bars that stayed open late at night but **from the nearby apartment complexes**, where the density of residents would naturally result in more calls to the Sheriff's Office.

These days, the apartment complexes are still an issue for those pushing for change. "I think everyone in the long run could have told you the biggest problems in Fat City are the dense living and the bars," Cvitanovich said. "Some people could tell you the bars are worse than the apartments. Some could tell you the dense living is worse than the bars."

Regardless, shutting the bars early will affect life at nearby apartments, said Melissa O'Neal. A manager of 300 units, under the company Asset Plus, O'Neal said she expects to drawing new tenants or raise rents down the line, due to a cleaner neighborhood with more attractions. "It is a positive change," O'Neal said. "We do anticipate in the future that it will draw new tenants."

Gayle Cohen, who runs two apartment complexes under the name Central Realty, said that she initially opposed the zoning ordinance. She found it unrealistic and feared it would hamper her business. "We saw the pictures of it, and I thought, 'This won't work over here. ... They wanted to re-do it like California and San Francisco.' I didn't think this area could do it," Cohen said. "I was afraid it was going to hurt us."

Over the past four years, Cohen's view flipped. Where once she walked to work past prostitutes and early-morning drinkers, that's gone. "I don't see as much of it anymore," she said. "It really is nice to walk down the street. ... It looks like it's all becoming something it was originally meant to be."

Cohen and Cvitanovich both point to a lingering Fat City headache: a lack of parking for apartment tenants, restaurant patrons, staff. Cvitanovich, who owns six multi-unit properties in the Fat City area, said he keeps eight units empty, at an estimated loss of \$10,000 in rent per month; he wants the parking spots for his restaurants.

Still, he said, parking is a small drawback compared to what has gotten better. "I've seen study after study of different things to do with Fat City," he said. "For the first time, I feel like something has been done. Is it perfect? No. But it's definitely a start."

The holdouts

While change chugs ahead, Fat City's oldest, most established bars have hunkered down. They defined themselves as joints for locals, as ragged-edged and saucy as they ever were.

At the Boom Boom's Bar, Charmayne Caronna-Laudun relished how little things had changed at this nook, open for 15 years. The bar still sports the refrigerator that a former florist used to preserve live flowers, and it's as if the fridge's cool work affected the entire room -- a dive bar like a time capsule, stuck somewhere in the pinkish 1980s. Still, there was one change: On a recent weeknight, there were eight customers, where Caronna guessed there might have been 30 before the law restricting bars' operating hours.

[A Boom Boom Bar bartender gives you her pitch on Fat City](#) Charmayne Caronna-Laudun

gives you her pitch on why you should head to Fat City, and to Boom Boom's.

In came Omar Garcia, whom Caronna-Laudun calls Chili. They know each other from way back, when he moved to Metairie in the construction boom after Hurricane Katrina, fell in love with Fat City and ended up supplementing his income as a bar back in a local lounge, a job he lost when the bar shuttered after the rezoning ordinance. "It used to be little Bourbon," Garcia recalled, of the neighborhood. "It was better the way it was then."

He comes to Boom Boom's only on the nights when he wants quiet, peace, a Bud Light. "I'll drink a couple of beers and head back," he said. "It's a nice, peaceful bar."

Those who come in come for quiet, or because they know each other or Caronna-Laudun, because this bar is their family, is as "family friendly" as Ohana, in a way.

At 9:35 p.m., a regular with a white beard and a cap, pulled down low, backed off his stool and moved to leave. "Charmayne, I love you," he said, to get her attention.

Caronna-Laudun turned. "I'll be back, when you start on Friday," the customer said.

"Thanks for the warning," she replied, feigning hate, emoting love, wiping down the bar after him.

Bars like this will never die, Caronna-Laudun said. "Somebody's got to have a good watering hole."

On Edenborn, the bar Cheers, where Caronna-Laudun used to serve, is shifting its image in the hopes of attracting a new clientele. "Our owner's a young guy, hip, 31," said Stephanie Beebee, a 23-year-old bartender from California. While staffing last month during happy hour, she put Katy Perry on the jukebox. "What is this?" said a woman at the counter.

Beebee said the bar has made swift changes: an interior renovation, a dance night with a disc jockey, \$20 all-you-can-drink nights. Still, she said, the ordinance deters younger bar goers who want to stay out late dancing. "I want this to be a younger crowd again," Beebee said.

Change is hard, said Lee-Sheng, the Parish Council member who pushed for Fat City's transformation, and it is easy to have rosy memories of what might not have really been a paradise. "I think it's nostalgia. People have good memories of it," she said. "But it wasn't successful. It wasn't an attraction. It was something most people were avoiding."

Next month, Lee-Sheng is set to accept an **award from the American Planning Association for efforts to remake Fat City**. Still, she remembers how it once was. Lee-Sheng said her aunt was one of the first bar owners in the area, running a Polynesian-style club with live music acts nightly. The bar was designed with a miniature bridge, served customers pu pu platters and employed waiters who lighted fires at the table.

"People wore long gowns. It was high end," Lee-Sheng recalled. "I have very nostalgic memories of it, too. I was in that place as a child.

And I laugh, now, because I don't know if I was supposed to be there at all."



PRESS RELEASE
February 18, 2014

JEDCO Hosts Small Business Pitch Development Workshop

Grow with JEDCO seminar scheduled for end of February

(METAIRIE, La) -- A good pitch can often times make the difference between landing the funding to bring a dream into reality or coming up empty-handed. A successful pitch takes preparation, communication and knowledge of your target audience. The Jefferson Parish Economic Development Commission (JEDCO) will offer a seminar to get small business owners ready to make the perfect pitch.

As part of the [Grow with JEDCO](#) series, the economic development commission will host "Get Funded Fast: A Climber's Guide to the Perfect Pitch" to improve your chances of obtaining financing. Communication experts, Aimee Freeman of [Aimee Freeman Consulting](#) and Brian Greffenius of [Sandler Training](#), combine their expertise to offer a comprehensive guide to selling big ideas with complete confidence. In this seminar, they'll cover topics, such as:

- How to identify your target audience
- Tools to strengthen pitch preparation
- The main components of successful communication
- Major mistakes entrepreneurs consistently make and how to overcome them
- Tips to help you better sell your ideas

Join us on **February 26th at the East Bank Regional Library's Jefferson Room (4747 W. Napoleon Ave. Metairie) from 9:00-10:30**. Admission is free, but registration is required to attend. The event is open to all businesses and entrepreneurs. Click [here](#) to register. For more information, contact Alan Allgood at (504) 875-3928 or aallgood@jedco.org

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About JEDCO: JEDCO is an independent, yet complementary arm of Jefferson Parish government with the main objective of attracting, growing and creating new business in our area. Since its inception in 1987, JEDCO has aided thousands of companies through [business incubator](#) and [loan programs, tax incentives and rebate programs, workforce development](#) and information services. While dedicated to assisting existing Jefferson Parish businesses, JEDCO's efforts also target the recruitment of new businesses for the area.

About Aimee Freeman: Aimee Freeman consults privately with entrepreneurs and business leaders who are ready to take their communication to the next level. Her passion is helping brilliant thinkers simplify their ideas so investors and clients clearly understand their products and services. No matter

how great your expertise, if you can't communicate in compelling ways that lead to sales, your business won't thrive. Aimee is best known for her ability to help clients understand who their ideal clients are, what they care about most, and how to speak to them in compelling ways that make them buy or invest right now. She leads a variety of popular workshops, including "*Communication that Sells*."

About Brian Greffenius: Brian is the president of Sandler Training in New Orleans, a sales force development corporation that provides consulting, training and evaluations. He has 18 years of experience as a CEO and COO. His career has exposed him to multiple industries and his experience as a trainer has provided him an opportunity to become an engaging and dynamic speaker. He has worked in technology, law firm operations and aviation industries along with having earned an MBA. Sales training is about communication and reaching decisions - two skills that take people far in their day-to-day lives. Sandler Training is an international company with 250 offices around the world and has been in business close to 40 years.

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JEDCO hosting business-pitch coaching session



Alan Allgood, right, meeting with entrepreneurs at JEDCO's Business Innovation Center. Allgood was named innovation and entrepreneurship manager for the Jefferson Economic Development Commission in September 2013. *(Photo courtesy of JEDCO)*

[Print](#)



By [Mark Waller, NOLA.com | The Times-Picayune](#)

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on February 19, 2014 at 1:07 PM, updated February 19, 2014 at 1:17 PM

With **New Orleans Entrepreneur Week** approaching next month, the Jefferson Parish Economic Development Commission is hosting a coaching session for small business owners on crafting their pitches.

Taking place Feb. 26 in the Jefferson Room of the East Bank Regional Library at 4747 W. Napoleon Ave. in Metairie, the program features communications consultant **Aimee Freeman** and Brian Greffenius of the **Sandler Training** sales force training firm. It will run from 9 a.m. to 10:30 a.m.

The session is called "Get Funded Fast: A Climber's Guide to the Perfect Pitch," and it will cover designing presentations and tailoring them to audiences.

JEDCO itself has a business pitch competition it produces in conjunction with Entrepreneur Week. The training session is free but requires **online registration**. Anyone seeking more information can contact **Alan Allgood**, JEDCO's entrepreneurship and innovation director, at 504.875.3928 or aallgood@jedco.org.

Grow with JEDCO presents

Get Funded Fast:

A Climber's Guide to the Perfect Pitch

IS YOUR PITCH INVESTOR-READY?

A good pitch can make the difference between landing the funding you need to grow your company or coming up empty-handed. That's the philosophy behind the second small business seminar in the Jefferson Parish Economic Development Commission's educational business series, **Grow with JEDCO.**

In this seminar, you'll learn:

- Critical components of a successful pitch
- How to better sell your ideas
- How to identify your target audience

Aimee Freeman of Aimee Freeman Consulting and Brian Greffenius of Sandler Training combine their expertise to offer a comprehensive guide to selling big ideas with complete confidence.

Grow with JEDCO is a new educational series for small businesses and entrepreneurs. Throughout the year, JEDCO will host over a dozen events to help you grow and find success locally.

FEBRUARY 26, 2014

9:00 AM - 10:30 AM

East Bank Regional Library

Jefferson Room

4747 W. Napoleon Avenue

Metairie, La 70001

Register for this **FREE** event at
www.jedco.org or call
(504) 875-3908.



I beat up Scut Farkus

By Ed Clancy

Like much of America, one of my favorite Christmas movies is "A Christmas Story." It wasn't so popular when it was released in theaters in 1983 but over the

years it exploded on television and has been shown as an annual 24 hour marathon ever since 1997.

The story is about a nine-year-old boy who can't wait for Christmas to come every year to his Indiana home town. The movie is set in 1939 and this particular year the boy, named Ralphie, wants a Red Ryder BB gun. Ralphie's main obsessions are two radio shows, namely cowboy hero "Red Ryder" and "Little Orphan Annie." Radio shows in those days kept the kids interested with things you could send away for and things you could badger your parents to buy in the store. Red Ryder had the BB rifle you could get your dad to buy, or, if that failed, as it did for Ralphie, ask Santa to bring. Orphan Annie had her secret decoder, which Ralphie sent away for remembering to include, of course, the cost of the decoder and the required number of Ovaltine labels.

While I don't go as far back as 1939 I do identify with the movie and little Ralph in three ways.

First, I had sent away for my share of "premiums" from radio shows. The one that sticks in my mind was from "Sergeant Preston of the Yukon." The Sergeant Preston show was produced by the same folks who brought us "The Lone Ranger" and I listened to that show religiously – "Return with us now to those thrilling days of yesteryear. From out of the past come the thundering hoof beats of the great horse Silver! The Lone Ranger rides again! 'Hi-Yo, Silver, Awayyyy!'" But, for some reason, I favored Preston, a member of the Royal Canadian Northwest Mounted Police. The Lone Ranger had Silver, but Preston had the great dog King

– "On King! On you huskies!!"

Having sent in the requisite cereal box tops, I finally received in the mail an official and legal deed to one square inch of land in the Yukon Territory. It was in my mind, I'm sure, that someday I would go and visit my very own land in the Great White North. It meant more to me than the genuine silver bullet given to me many years later by Clayton Moore, who played the Lone Ranger on television.

Secondly, I lived in a snowy climate just like Ralphie. His was Indiana, mine was central New York State. Just like Ralphie's mother, my mom would spend what seemed like hours jamming me into my snow suit to go to school or out to play. Winters were rough up there and it took a lot of heavy coats and mittens and galoshes to go out and be uncomfortable in the wind and snowdrifts. One of the great scenes in the movie is when little brother Randy has to waddle to school following the other kids screaming, "I can't put my arms down!"

And lastly, my identification with Ralphie was complete when he finally stood up to his nemesis, the class bully, a kid named Scut Farkus. He was as ugly as his name.

With his minion (apparently he couldn't afford more than one minion) standing ominously at his side, Scut would make Ralphie's life miserable in a thousand ways but one day he went too far. As Ralphie was going home from school he was smashed in the face by a huge snowball. Scut and his minion taunted Ralphie, asking if "the baby is going to cry."

That did it.

Ralphie charged toward the much larger Scut, threw him to the snow and started pounding the living snot out of him. Pow, Pow, Pow! Ralphie beat Scut Farkus mercilessly until Farkus started crying.

When I was about ten or twelve years old I had my own Scut Farkus – my cousin Richie. He was not a big kid but he was muscled and wiry and strong. He spent much of his life taunting me and generally abusing me. I had a certain amount of admiration for his agility. I once saw him jump from a tractor that was flying out of the second floor of a hay barn into the barnyard below, landing on its side with a huge tractor tire buried

in the mud. If Richie had not jumped onto the roof of the attached milk shed, this story would never have happened.

One day Richie was over at my house and we were on my front lawn when he started in. I don't remember what he said exactly but I do remember my blood starting to boil. He issued some final insult and he punched my arm and he punched hard.

That did it.

I blindly flew at him and knocked him to the ground. I started hitting him and I knew I could not stop because if I did he would kill me or close to it. I hit and hit and hit, and all of a sudden, my macho cousin Richie started crying and pleading with me to stop. I couldn't believe either that I made him cry or that I did the thing in the first place. Cousin Richie never bothered me again.

That, however, is not the end of the story. After I left my home town I never saw Richie again until many, many years later when I was home for a visit. I guess we were both at least in our forties. I happened to see him on the street talking with my cousin, Patrick, and I stopped to say hello to Patrick, not recognizing Richie at all. When I finally figured out who he was I couldn't contain myself. I turned to Richie and said, "Remember that time when we were kids and I beat the hell out of you on my lawn?"

He looked at me very strangely and said he didn't know what I was talking about. At that point I knew one of two things – he really did forget or block out the incident or he was lying. I think he was lying. I hope he was lying. It would be really disappointing if my shining moment had gone for naught. Yeah, he was lying.

Well, whether he was or not I will always be able to claim that I was the first to beat up Scut Farkus.

Maybe I should have asked for royalties. ☆

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Community

JEDCO launches second annual entrepreneur pitch competition

The Jefferson Parish Economic Development Commission (JEDCO) recently announced the launch of its second annual pitch competition for entrepreneurs living and working in Jefferson Parish. Held during New Orleans Entrepreneur Week, an event spearheaded by The Idea Village, the JEDCO Challenge will elevate opportunities for early-stage companies in the area.

The competition will be held on Tuesday, March 25, 2014 in front of a panel of Jefferson Parish business leaders and an audience of their peers. Finalists will be judged on a seven-minute pitch and a business plan, which must be submitted in advance of the competition. The winning pitch will receive a business-boosting prize package of in-kind business services and direct capital to be used to help grow the company in Jefferson Parish. To date, the prize package is valued at more than \$20,000 with plans to continue growing until the competition.

JEDCO is looking for entrepreneurs with unique ideas that have the high potential to grow and positively impact Jefferson Parish. Entrepreneurs are urged to apply for the challenge on JEDCO's website. They must meet the following criteria to be eligible. The entrepreneurs must live, work or have a strong presence in Jefferson Parish, must generate less than \$1 million in revenue, must have less than 10 employees and must be a for-profit company.

The application will be live on JEDCO's website for one month through February 7, 2014. Applicants will be narrowed down through a rigorous review process. Finalists will be chosen at the end of February with one month for pitch preparation and business plan assistance.

"Entrepreneurs are the future of Jefferson Parish and we will do everything we can to best assist them as they grow," says JEDCO Executive Director Jerry Bologna. "This entrepreneur challenge provides us with a platform to better connect with the future leaders of our Jefferson Parish business community. It is exciting for JEDCO to play a role in helping these companies find success in Jefferson

Parish and we look forward to providing a continuous support system in the future."

In 2013, the pitch competition was born out of a challenge posed by Jefferson Parish start-up, Cordina New Orleans Cocktails. The company, which creates on-the-go adult drinks, asked JEDCO to host a pitch competition for local entrepreneurs. Not only did the event showcase the entrepreneurial ecosystem in Jefferson Parish, but it also connected local up-and-comers with today's business leaders through direct capital, business resources and mentorship.

In the competition's first year, four finalists competed in front of an audience of more than 115 people. With sponsorships from more than a dozen local companies, the 2013 winner, Billy Bosch of Be Well Nutrition, Inc., walked away from the competition with more than \$50,000 in direct capital and in-kind services. Billy used the prize package to help launch two flavors of the company's new health drink, ICONIC.

The entrepreneur challenge will be held during New Orleans Entrepreneur Week for the second year in a row. The culmination of the Idea Village's annual Entrepreneur Season, NOEW has become the premiere showcase event for the New Orleans entrepreneurial ecosystem. NOEW 2014 is expected to engage 5,000+ of the nation's most innovative business leaders, financiers, entrepreneurs and students.

This event is possible with assistance from Jefferson Parish businesses and organizations sponsors including the Jefferson Chamber of Commerce, Cordina New Orleans Cocktails, Baker Donelson, MMI Culinary Services, Gambel Communications, Ardyn Thriffily and Associates, First NBC Bank and A Journey to Success. JEDCO is still accepting additional donations of in-kind services and money to grow the JEDCO Challenge prize package.

The deadline to apply for the JEDCO Challenge is February 7, 2014. Visit JEDCO's website for additional information at www.JEDCO.com. ☆

THE ADVOCATE

Around Town for Jan. 26, 2014

Former Gov. Buddy Roemer

Tue, 28 Jan 2014
0 Comments

Deadline nears for entrepreneur contest

The deadline for entering the JEDCO Entrepreneur Challenge, a contest that awards Jefferson Parish businesses financial assistance and mentoring for their new ventures, is Feb. 7.

The contest is open to entrepreneurs who live, work or have a strong presence in Jefferson Parish; own a for-profit company; generate up to \$1 million in revenue; and have a maximum of 10 employees.

Those who apply will go through a three-tier review process. Finalists will work alongside a group of advisers and then pitch their idea in front of a selection panel during the Idea Village's Entrepreneur Week in late March.

More than \$18,000 in awards will be distributed to winners.

To apply, visit www.jedco.org/jedco-entrepreneur-challenge.



Final Navy warship leaves Avondale Shipyard

Updated: Feb 10, 2014 6:46 PM CST <em class="wnDate">Monday, February 10, 2014 7:46 PM EST
Written by: Sabrina Wilson - [email](#)

NEW ORLEANS, LA (WVUE) - On a less than clear Monday morning, a mammoth vessel came into view. It was a sight that brought some out along the Mississippi riverfront to wave good-bye as the USS Somerset began its journey north.

The ship left Avondale Shipyard, where it was constructed. It is named in honor of the 911 victims aboard United Flight 93, which crashed in Somerset County, Pa. For Avondale workers, witnessing the ship's departure was bittersweet. The Somerset was the last Navy warship that will be built at Avondale. At one time, Avondale had thousands of workers.

"It ain't a great feeling. I mean, it is what it is - I guess we have to make due," said employee Peter Pierre as he walked to his car Monday afternoon.

After a series of steep layoffs in recent years, Avondale's remaining workers had pride mixed with pensiveness as the ship departed.

"It was a good thing. It's over with, you know?" said Clifton Smith. Smith, a scaffolding builder, has worked at Avondale for 34 years. "We've been here a long time. We're just going to wait it out and see what happens."

"Avondale has played an integral part of the economy in Jefferson for decades," said Jerry Bologna, Executive Director of the Jefferson Parish Economic Development Commission, or JEDCO. "It is a sad day, but JEDCO, along with the parish, the State Department of Economic Development, Greater New Orleans Inc. - all of these organizations have been working in concert to identify new prospects to bring work to that yard."

Bill Glenn, a spokesman for Huntington Ingalls Industries, which owns Avondale, issued a statement which said, "We continue to aggressively look for commercial work to redeploy Avondale and its great workforce. That being said, if all else fails, we will have to close the facility."

Smith and other workers hope a way is found to breathe new life into Avondale.

"I hope something comes through, because you have a lot of people around here that need some work," Smith said. "You know, we lost a lot of good employees, and so they just got a few of us left and we hope something happens between now and then."

"The infrastructure there is an extremely important asset," said Bologna. "It's a great infrastructure, and a lot of different types of industries can utilize that."

Glenn said work continues at Avondale on units for the amphibious ships LPD 26 and LPD 27, which are under construction in another state. That work will wrap up in the third quarter of this year.

THE ADVOCATE

N.O. company scaling heights to install NBA, NFL signs

BY JAQUETTA WHITE

jwhite@theadvocate.com

Mon, 17 Feb 2014

0 Comments

When New Orleans last hosted the NBA All-Star Game in 2008, sign maker Crystal Clear Imaging had never hung a sign more than 30 feet above the ground.

But when the sportswear company adidas wanted to hire the local firm to go 10 times as high, 300 feet into the air, to create a massive mural of NBA player Kevin Garnett on the side of Benson Tower, CCI co-owner Arthur Boisfontaine took the job, never letting on that his firm would be working in new territory.

“If adidas comes to you and says, ‘Can you do this?’ you don’t say no,” Boisfontaine said.

The risk paid off.

CCI has since been tapped by the NBA and NFL to design, print and install signs big and small, including more building wraps, for their largest events.

The oversized Vince Lombardi Trophy displayed on the Hyatt Regency New Orleans hotel during last year’s Super Bowl? That was CCI’s doing. So was the huge photo of Sean Payton hung above the Saints’ practice field while the coach was suspended a season ago.

This week has been one of the company’s busiest. Employees are working into the wee hours of the morning to plaster the NBA’s logo and the faces of its stars on vinyl, fabric and plastic that will make their way to CBD hotels, the Smoothie King Center, the Ernest N. Morial Convention Center and nightclubs around the city in preparation for NBA All-Star Weekend. The event kicks off today and culminates with the NBA All-Star Game on Sunday.

“Our installers are working 20 hours a day,” Boisfontaine said. “This event is more than just a game. There’s just tons of money right now being spent on the parties, from lighting to catering to decor, and that’s where we come in. We’re the go-to company.”

Boisfontaine and his partners created CCI in 1999. The company initially did legal copying and printed trial exhibits before gaining hospitals and other large local companies as clients.

By 2005, before Hurricane Katrina, the company received a huge chunk of its work from casinos in Louisiana and Mississippi. But the gaming halls, particularly those on the Mississippi Gulf Coast, cut back on spending after the storm as they focused on rebuilding, Boisfontaine said. CCI was able to sustain itself for a while by making yard signs, the primary means of communication for New Orleanians who returned to a city very different from the one they had left.

“When we came back from Katrina, we didn’t know what we were getting into because our world was completely changed,” Boisfontaine said. “We lost an absolute ton of business.”

The company decided to change its business model, trading casinos for sports.

“When the Saints came back from San Antonio, we were basically on their doorstep, knocking on their door,” Boisfontaine said.

The team gave the company a contract to print and install signs in the Mercedes-Benz Superdome as it was preparing for the 2006 season.

“They were working in the Superdome putting up signs for 48 hours straight until the day of the ‘Monday Night Football’ kickoff,” said Jean-Paul Dardenne, senior vice president of corporate partnerships for the Saints and Pelicans.

CCI has worked for the city’s professional sports teams ever since. The local teams now field inquiries from other franchises looking to hire CCI to replicate the work it does in the Superdome and Smoothie King Center, Dardenne said.

“In the sports world, other teams have taken notice,” he said. “With New Orleans being such a destination for major events, (other teams) want to know who we are using.”

CCI has grown from a 14-person operation in 2006 to about 60 employees and contractors. Revenue climbed from about \$1.5 million in 2006 to \$8 million in 2013. Boisfontaine said he expects to top \$10 million this year.

The company now has offices in Atlanta and San Francisco and a client list that includes the Golden State Warriors, Oakland Raiders and Atlanta’s professional football, basketball and baseball teams.

Adidas is still a client, too. On its return to New Orleans for the 2014 NBA All-Star Weekend, the shoe company sent CCI back atop Benson Tower.

This time, three installers spent several days affixing 1,200 adhesive vinyl panels to the tower to create a 247-foot-tall, 110-foot-wide picture of Houston Rockets player Dwight Howard. Despite the recent bad weather, it was easier this time around, Boisfontaine said.

“Our growth has just been off the charts,” he said. “We’ve gotten so much better than we’ve ever been.”



MEDIA ADVISORY
February 5, 2014

Lakeside Shopping Center announces expansion

(METAIRIE, La) -- Jefferson Parish is scheduled to celebrate a very exciting day in economic development. The Jefferson Parish Economic Development Commission (JEDCO) is pleased to participate in a major announcement happening at the Lakeside Shopping Center Thursday morning. This announcement will have a long-lasting impact on the community, creating jobs and new opportunities.

Lakeside Shopping Center will detail the plans for an 11,500 square-foot expansion and the attraction of a leading restaurant to the state of Louisiana. The Greater Lakeside Corporation continues to take steps to ensure a one-of-a-kind shopping experience for the customers of Lakeside Shopping Center. In the fall of 2013, Lakeside welcomed four unique stores to the market (Janie and Jack, Pandora, The Engraving Company and Well) and unveiled a multimillion dollar food court renovation. In 2014, the good news continues, as Lakeside Shopping Center will become home to the state's first Vera Bradley store and a large restaurant with the highest average unit volumes in the industry.

EVENT DETAILS

When:

Thursday, February 6, 2014
10AM

Where:

The Center Court of Lakeside Shopping Center (near Victoria's Secret)
3301 Veterans Memorial Blvd.
Metairie, La

Who:

Greater Lakeside Corporation
A Leading Restaurant
Jefferson Parish

Who Should Attend

Media
Local political leaders
Anyone who loves desert



Lakeside Shopping Center plans expansion, adds The Cheesecake Factory



Posted on February 6, 2014 at 10:31 AM

WWLTV.com

Email: webteam@wwltv.com | Twitter: [@WWLTV](https://twitter.com/WWLTV)

METAIRIE, La. -- Construction is underway on a 9,300 square foot The Cheesecake Factory at Lakeside Shopping Center in Metairie, Louisiana.

The Metairie location of The Cheesecake Factory will be just outside of the North Causeway entrance of the Shopping Center and will feature three dining rooms, two patios, a bar, a bakery and valet parking.

In conjunction with this expansion, the Causeway entrance of Lakeside Shopping Center will also be redesigned.

The newly designed mall entrance and restaurant are expected to open in May of 2014. Greater Lakeside Corporation, which owns Lakeside Shopping Center, is taking steps to create a one of a kind shopping experience for customers. In the fall of 2013, Lakeside Shopping Center welcomed four unique stores to the market- Pandora, The Engraving Company, Well and Janie and Jack- and unveiled a multi-million dollar food court renovation.

In 2014, Lakeside Shopping Center will become home to the state's first The Cheesecake Factory and Vera Bradley store.

“Customers travel to Lakeside from all over the Gulf Coast region expecting to find all of their favorite stores in one center; we deemed it time to add another one of their favorite restaurants. Lakeside Shopping Center is the perfect home for The Cheesecake Factory and we're pleased to work with the company and the city to help bring jobs by way of a leading dining establishment to the community,” said Jeffery Feil, President of Greater Lakeside Corporation.



Smoothie King CEO Wan Kim's rise continues as firm's name goes up in New Orleans Arena lights



When **Wan Kim** opened the first **Smoothie King** franchise in Seoul in 2003, most South Koreans had never heard the word "smoothie."

Was it a brand name like Big Mac, they wondered, or more of a general food category, like cheeseburger?

"The fact that we were the king didn't matter," Kim recalled last week at his office in Metairie. "People would say to me: 'Smoothie? What the heck is that?'"

But Kim was committed. He had beaten out two other competitors for the rights to build 50 stores in South Korea over the next five years. If he was going to succeed, he realized, he would have to single-handedly create the smoothie market in South Korea.

Which is what he did. Today, South Korea has more than 130 Smoothie King locations, accounting for a large portion of the retailer's 680 total outlets worldwide, the rest of which are scattered across the United States, Singapore and the Cayman Islands. Kim's success was such that, in July 2012, he bought the company from its New Orleans-based founder, Steve Kuhnau, for \$50 million. He then declared his new mission: to create 1,000 franchised and corporate Smoothie King locations across the United States by 2017.

As a sign of Kim's seriousness, he recently relocated his wife and three children from Seoul to Metairie, close to where Kuhnau opened The Original Smoothie Bar 40 years ago, before streamlining the name to Smoothie King. And to ensure that Smoothie King and New Orleans remain deeply intertwined in the national consciousness, Kim last week won a 10-year deal to rename the New Orleans Arena, the home of the NBA's Pelicans, the **Smoothie King Center**. Judging from Twitter, the arena's nickname -- **The Blender** -- has already stuck.

"Believe it or not, there are people in the U.S. who still don't know what a smoothie is," said Kuhnau, 67, who claims to have been the first to publicly associate the term with a nutritional, blended-fruit beverage. "But now, through Wan's efforts, the Smoothie King Center is going to ring out across the country. People no longer have an excuse to say, 'What the hell is a smoothie?'"

Kim, 41, first learned what a smoothie was as an undergraduate at Boston University in the mid-'90s. A typically unhealthy college student, he subsisted largely on pizza, fast food and beer. When a friend introduced him to a nearby smoothie vendor in Cambridge, it was a revelation.

"Smoothies seemed to me a guilt free thing," he said at Smoothie King's headquarters on Lake Pontchartrain, which offers views of the Causeway fading into the distance. "It had all the nutrients I need, so I could go back and drink more beer."

In South Korea, Kim's father, Hyojo, owns a \$200 million electronics manufacturer called Kyung In. After college, Kim spent a few years in San Diego, overseeing Kyung In's plant in Tijuana. But the lack of direct engagement with customers, plus the pressure of being in his father's shadow, turned him off.

Seeking some occupational clarity, Kim enrolled in business school at the University of California-Irvine. It was around this time that he encountered his first Smoothie King.

Kuhnau had come up with the concept in the late '60s, as a means of treating his own health problems. He was allergic to seemingly everything: dairy, wheat, various nuts. "Every time I feed you something, you throw it up," his mom told him.

"Believe it or not, there are people in the U.S. who still don't know what a smoothie is." -- Smoothie King co-founder Steve Kuhnau

As a teenager, Kuhnau, who grew up in Kenner, started blending fruits, vegetables and vitamins in his kitchen. In his early 20s, while working as a scrub nurse at Brooks General Hospital in San Antonio, he served his high-protein concoctions to patients in the burn unit, which he thought helped their wounds to heal.

At age 27, Kuhnau opened The Original Smoothie Bar at the corner of Mississippi Avenue and Veterans Boulevard, a retail dead zone one block from Interstate 10. "It was the worst location, just horrible," he said. Still, the store was busy for breakfast, lunch and dinner. From that location, the brand slowly crept across the country, eventually becoming "Smoothie King" in 1989.



"My trademark attorney told me I needed a name with less syllables, like Xerox or Exxon," he said. Later that night, it hit him. "I thought, 'Should I be so bold as to call myself the smoothie king?'" His initials, SK, seemed like a premonition. "I was sort of embarrassed to call myself that. Then again, I was the one who made all those damned drinks."

Kim does not remember what type of smoothie he ordered that day 1997. Nor does he recall thinking he should introduce Smoothie King to South Korea. That thought

occurred to him only after he and some friends had raised \$15 million for a venture capital firm in Seoul, only to see it disappear after the dot-com bubble burst.

The investor mentality never appealed to him anyway. "I have more of a CEO personality," Kim said. "I like to work hard and sweat and then see the results."

The next four years put his work ethic to the test. He opened his first Smoothie King in Myong Dong, Seoul's equivalent of Times Square. The location was epic: a two-story, 6,000-square foot layout with seating for 150. (Kuhnau's inaugural store, by contrast, had no seating at all.) To secure it, Kim had laid out a \$1.3 million deposit, on top of the \$27,000 in rent.

And while he continued to add locations, he lost money for four years. During that time, he slept an average of four hours a night. He and his team scheduled meetings with potential investors for

midnight or 1 a.m.-- regular business hours for Smoothie King South Korea--and then acted surprised when investors called them crazy. His father told him to give up.

But in 2007, for reasons Kim cannot fully explain, they posted a \$200,000 profit. The shift coincided with the growing presence of health and fitness centers in South Korea. But whatever the cause, Kim's profits grew exponentially from then on. As the only game in town, Kim said, South Koreans referred to Smoothie King simply as "Smoothie," as in, "Let's go to Smoothie."

Kim first approached Kuhnau and his wife, Cindy, about buying the brand in 2009. They weren't ready to sell, but they respected Kim's efforts to grow the company.

"Normally, franchisees open a single location, then hire a manager or their kids to run the place," Kuhnau said. "But then Wan comes along and opens up 100 stores without batting an eye."

Kim also showed a gift for marketing. In a kind of preview of the Smoothie King Center deal, he recently launched a wildly popular advertising campaign featuring South Korean figure skater and 2010 Winter Olympic gold medalist Kim Yuna, further driving sales, Kuhnau said.

Kuhnau finally came around in late 2011. According to **Franchise Times** magazine, he had written a check to himself for \$50 million upon founding the company, and showed it to Kim during negotiations. With backing from National Pension Service of Korea and Standard Chartered Plc, a U.K. bank that earns much of its profits in Asia, Kim bought the company, though Kuhnau remains a stockholder.

Smoothie King faces more competition today than it once did. Jamba Juice, for instance, which was founded in California in 1990 and acquired by Service Acquisitions Corp for \$265 million in 2006, has more than 800 locations worldwide, including South Korea. Its slogan, "That felt good," bears a passing resemblance to Smoothie King's long-term tagline: "Be good to yourself."

For this reason, Kim is striving to differentiate Smoothie King from the rest of the field. In addition to the arena naming rights and the revamped logo (three red splashes that evoke the Smoothie King crown), Kim is rolling out a new slogan in 2014: "Smoothies with a purpose."

At the same time, he is conscious of the brand's roots. The original menu boards, advertising staples like "Immune Builder" and "Muscle Punch," adorn the walls of his office. In one corner, a 40-year collection of Styrofoam Smoothie King cups sits next to a basketball signed by the new NBA commissioner, Adam Silver.

In many ways, purchasing the name of an American basketball stadium is a fitting symbol for Kim's entrepreneurial ambitions in the United States and New Orleans. Like many men his age around the world, he grew up idolizing Michael Jordan.

"Michael Jordan was part of a league, yes, but he was also in another league, of his own," he said. "His lesson to me was: You can always do more."



Pelicans uniting with Smoothie King

The [New Orleans Pelicans](#) will announce on Thursday a 10-year naming rights deal that will result in their home being called the Smoothie King Center.

Financial terms of the deal with franchisor Smoothie King, which has 675 stores in the U.S., South Korea and Singapore, were not being disclosed. The company has about 75 employees working at its New Orleans headquarters.

"Our mission is to invest locally, regionally, nationally and internationally," said Tom O'Keefe, Smoothie King's president and COO. "This deal satisfies all those goals."



Smoothie King will get its logo all over the arena and have two kiosks that will serve smoothies at the venue's events. O'Keefe said the areas will not only serve as a retail experience, but also hope to lure new franchisees.

The entrance will feature two 20-foot high Smoothie King cups that will be in place in time for next weekend's NBA All-Star Game. The company's logo will also be on the roof of the arena.

O'Keefe said the deal took a long time to put together because the company wanted to be seen as athlete-friendly. To pass muster, the company tested all of its ingredients to make sure it was compliant with what athletes in all leagues could ingest. O'Keefe said a few ingredients, which made up less than 1 percent of Smoothie King's \$160 million in systemwide sales last year, were eliminated from the company's menu.

Although the state of Louisiana owns both this arena and the Superdome, the naming rights of which were sold to Mercedes-Benz, the marketing teams of Pelicans and Saints owner Tom Benson consummated both deals.

Pelicans president Dennis Lauscha said such a deal had been a "gigantic" piece of owner Benson's business plan since he bought the long-struggling small-market franchise from the NBA in the spring of 2012.

"Finding a naming rights partner was key to the long-term financial viability of this franchise in this market," Lauscha said.

Team officials said there were "two or three" other candidates for a naming rights deal, but that Smoothie King's interests seemed most aligned with the Benson's goals of promoting the business climate in his home state.

"There's no more perfect story to say how businesses can root themselves in New Orleans and grow," said Rita Benson LeBlanc, Benson's granddaughter and a part owner of the Pelicans and Saints. She added that the agreement is "a testament to how New Orleans has recovered [from Hurricane Katrina] and how Louisiana is redefining itself as an economic development engine."