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## Business

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### Retail Watch: Economy claims two more capital-area eateries

Published: Tuesday, May. 12, 2009 - 12:00 am | Page 9B

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A small, printed sign on the door at Stagecoach Too told employees where they could pick up their paychecks.

Inside, place settings sat atop tables waiting for the lunch rush that would never come. Outside, co-owner Debbra Stevens broke the news to an older couple: The Greenhaven-area eatery had closed its doors for good.

"We gave our heart and soul to this, our heart and soul," Stevens said later, her voice breaking.

Stagecoach Too, child of long-standing Stagecoach Restaurant on Florin Road, has shut after 19 months for an all-too common reason these days: the economy.

The late April closing followed the shutdown of another nearby family-owned eatery, Buckthorns Cafe, at the Promenade shopping center on Rush River Drive. It shut April 18.

An open letter "to our loyal Buckthorns customers" posted on the cafe's door said, "We can no longer continue to keep our doors open due to many factors and the way the economy is doing." Buckthorns' owners could not be reached for comment Monday.

At Stagecoach Too on Monday, Debbra Stevens and husband and co-owner Derrick Stevens took a break from cleaning to contemplate their restaurant's closing.

The original Stagecoach at 4365 Florin Road, opened 32 years ago by Derrick's father and now run by the couple, was busy as always on Monday.

The same was true for a while at the new site due west, at 390 Florin Road.

They signed the lease in October 2007, "right before the mess," Derrick Stevens said, and opened that December. Business was good at first, so good "it was like picking clover," he said in his booming cadence.



ANNE CHADWICK WILLIAMS Bee file, 2007 Dan Flynn, executive director of the Olive Center at UC Davis, said Sicilian-style olives in jars bearing the school name – grown, processed and donated by private producers – are selling well.

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But warning signs started to appear, signs familiar across the struggling restaurant sector. As the economy worsened, customers, especially seniors on fixed incomes, stayed home. Business dried up.

"We had a big senior trade and saw that people were splitting meals or taking them home," Derrick Stevens said. "Now, they're eating at home."

The couple considered sticking it out, but keeping it open threatened the future of both restaurants, Derrick said.

A handful of Stagecoach Too's 22 employees have been absorbed by the original restaurant.

"We had a lot of support from the people around here, but there's just not enough business now," Debbra Stevens said.

– Darrell Smith

## UCD-branded olives on sale to benefit research center

The University of California, Davis, Olive Center is benefiting from a different kind of olive green.

Green, as in money.

Last month, the Olive Center began offering a new line of Sicilian-style table olives, a boutique segment of the California olive industry.

The brine-cured olives – available in "Sicilian Spiced," "Gourmet Garlic" and "Lemon Citrus" flavors – were grown and processed in Glenn County and then donated to the Olive Center to be marketed under the UC Davis brand.

The 10-ounce jars are on sale at the UCD bookstore (and its Web site) for \$7 each.

The initial run of 6,000 jars could potentially raise \$25,000 to support the Olive Center, the first-of-its-kind research center in North America. That would be some serious green to a center that opened last year with a \$200,000 operating budget.

Dan Flynn, the Olive Center's executive director, said sales kicked off over the April 18-19 weekend, coinciding with Davis' annual Picnic Day open house.

"We gave away 50 jars, one olive at a time. We moved quite a few cases that weekend," Flynn said. He estimated that about 300 jars of olives were sold over the Picnic Day weekend alone.

West Coast Products, a producer of specialty olive products and brine-cured olives since 1937, grew and cured the UCD-branded olives for nine months, and Penna Gourmet Olives, an olive producer for more than 30 years, marinated and bottled them. Both companies are based in Orland.

"Traditionally, the state's olive industry has focused on growing, processing and selling black-ripe olives for canning," Flynn said. "The Sicilian-style olives represent an emerging boutique segment of the industry."

The UCD olives can be purchased online at [www.bookstore.ucdavis.edu](http://www.bookstore.ucdavis.edu) (typing "olives" in the search link brings them up). The bookstore's phone number is (530) 752-6846.

According to the Fresno-based California Olive Committee, California produces more than 95 percent of the olives grown in the United States. There are about 1,200 olive growers statewide.

– Mark Glover

## Wal-Mart downsizes big-box format for Latino market

Big-box sales turned Wal-Mart into a prodigious retail giant, but the Arkansas-based retailer is



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introducing a different strategy: a different box for a different market.

The 39,000-square-foot Supermercado de Walmart debuted April 28 in Houston, representing the company's venture into retail diversification, said Natalie Berg, an analyst with London-based Planet Retail.

"It's further indication that Wal-Mart is moving away from its one size-fits-all strategy," she said.

If the concept is successful, there's a chance it could come to California, Berg said. Wal-Mart officials could not be reached for comment.

Products and services will appeal to the surrounding community, which is 70 percent Latino, according to the company.

The company is also planning to open a Sam's Club warehouse format targeting Latino shoppers sometime this year called Mas Club, also in Houston.

The Houston metropolitan area is home to 1.8 million Latinos, according to the latest census information. The Sacramento metropolitan area has a Latino population of 373,000.

If Wal-Mart does expand the concept, California is a logical location, Berg said. But she said the new stores will likely be more like laboratories, where the company can test the merchandise to introduce it into traditional stores.

"It's far more powerful for them to tweak the assortment in their mainstream stores to cater to the growing Hispanic population," she said.

– M.S. Enkoji

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