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Sibs seek to Sprinkles area with yogurt

The scions of Mealey's Furniture stores owners got help getting started

Philadelphia Business Journal - by [Peter Van Allen](#) Staff Writer

Two entrepreneurs in their 20s will open four frozen-yogurt stores that they hope will capitalize on a trend that started on the West Coast.

Sprinkles, as the shops will be known, has signed leases for stores in Cherry Hill, University City, West Chester and Malvern.

Frozen yogurt shops had a boom and bust in the early 1990s — “Seinfeld” even had an episode about it — but have made a comeback with vibrant hangouts that are giving coffee chains an unexpected competitor in Southern California.

“It’s definitely a craze out there,” said Matt Mealey, 24, a Jenkintown native who is starting Sprinkles with his sister Ryan Mealey, 27, and researched the retail concept in several trips west. “These places are packed all the time. At a couple of places, we saw these massive lines. They were very successful. We really studied the concept of frozen yogurt in California.”

“The places were superbusy. Frozen yogurt places were popping up everywhere,” Ryan added.

Cherry Hill will be the first location, opening June 19 at TownPlace at Garden State Park. In August, they’ll open a site at 3606 Chestnut St., near the [University of Pennsylvania](#) campus. A West Chester site is planned for September, at 22 S. High St., and a Malvern location is slated for December at Worthington Town Center, a shopping center under construction. They hope to open four more stores next year.

The pair are following a legacy of sibling business owners. Their father, Dan Mealey, operates Mealey’s Furniture with his brother Kevin. Mealey’s, based in Warminster, has five stores and was started by Jerry Mealey, Ryan and Matt’s grandfather. Ryan is and will remain vice president of merchandising for the furniture operation.

Both were raised in a retail, entrepreneurial environment.

“We have that entrepreneurial spirit — my grandfather, my father, my brother and I. We’re just bred that way. We thought this would be a great idea for the Philly region,” said Ryan, a 2004 graduate of [Villanova University](#).

“I always had a passion for starting my own business,” said Matt, who graduated from Pennsylvania State University in 2007 and earned an MBA from Temple University this year. “I wanted to find ‘the next big thing,’ something that’s going to be a big hit.”

To start Sprinkles, the siblings pooled their savings, but their dad is financing most of the front-end costs, allowing them to sidestep bank financing, Matt said.

In researching yogurt shops in Los Angeles, they focused their attention on two in particular: Los Angeles-based Pinkberry and Anaheim, Calif.-based Yogurtland. Pinkberry started in 2005 with a busy corner store in West Hollywood, a location whose steady customers dubbed it Crackberry for its addictive quality. Yogurtland has had similar success, and now has locations in six states and Japan.

“We took the best of each. The color scheme. We looked at the vendors, whose yogurt was better, which toppings were best,” said Matt.

To emulate the West Coast look, they hired a San Diego designer, Trio Display.

As for the frozen yogurt, the Mealeys will use a product called YoCream, which is produced by Portland, Ore.-based [YoCream International Inc.](#) YoCream is a premium yogurt with half the calories of high-end ice cream; most flavors are nonfat or low-fat.

A similar concept, [Phileo](#) Yogurt, opened in September at 416 South St.

Unlike ice cream shops, where servers scoop the product, Sprinkles, following the West Coast trend, will offer self-serve. Sprinkles stores will have eight machines dispensing 16 flavors of frozen yogurt. Customers will take a cup or a waffle bowl, fill it with as much yogurt and toppings as they can put in the bowl and pay 45 cents an ounce.

Flavors of frozen yogurt will include original tart, classic cappuccino, green tea tart, snickerdoodle dandy, “krazy Kahlua” and others.

In Cherry Hill, the store will be 1,200 square feet, with seating for 15 customers and WiFi. It will have 20 employees.



Curt Hudson

Matt Mealey and his sister Ryan Mealey. The siblings have plans for four Sprinkles shops right off the bat.

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Across California, many ice cream shops have been replaced with frozen yogurt shops, which in turn are stealing some of the traditional Starbucks crowd.

"We definitely feel like, especially at college campuses, people will come in to eat, bring their laptop, hang out," Ryan said.

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