

McDonald's 40th Anniversary



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Farmer has vision and determination to start local McDonald's franchise

ELIZABETH ANNA VALLA
evalla@columbustelegram.com

COLUMBUS – Who knew cracking open a Reader's Digest magazine could lead to a future of fortune in the local fast-food industry?

The Columbus McDonald's is about to celebrate its 40th birthday thanks to a middle-aged farmer with a vision and determination who set his family up for success generations later.

Exeter native and World War II veteran Howard Hall

had done it all, from flying fighter jets off U.S. carrier ships during his stint in the Navy to tilling up the land and harvesting fields at his Nebraska farm.

His son Dennis Hall, 66, recalls the story of how the third-generation local McDonald's started with a farmer intrigued by something that caught his eye.

"He read an article in the Reader's Digest about an up-and-coming franchise

called McDonald's," Dennis explained.

Howard read that the restaurant chain with 2,000 locations across the U.S. was looking to expand after opening its doors in 1955.

It's hard to imagine a time when McDonald's couldn't be found in every city – there are now around 14,000 locations in the U.S. and more than 36,000 worldwide – but that was the case when Howard saw the business write-up in the general-interest magazine.

The wheels started turning after he read that article and Howard took a day off from farming to drive nine hours to Chicago to learn what this McDonald's restaurant was all about.

"They asked him if he had an appointment for an interview and he replied, 'No,'" Dennis explained. "They told him he needed an appointment and dad said he

Continued on Page 4

All vintage photographs in this section are courtesy of the Hall Family.



Howard and Florence at McDonald's Grand Opening, September 1976.

McDonald's Timeline

-  Early 70s – Howard Hall, an Exeter farmer, reads in Reader's Digest about the McDonald's franchise.
-  1972 – Howard is approved to open a McDonald's after much perseverance.
-  1973 – Howard's sons, Kent and Dennis, open a pharmacy in Geneva.
-  1974 – Howard sells 160 acres of his farm for a down payment to obtain a McDonald's franchise.
-  1974 – He opens the Norfolk McDonald's location at the age of 50.
-  1976 – The Hall brothers realize their father is doing more business than they are. Dennis and Kent sell their pharmacy and join forces with their father, opening the state's first drive-thru restaurant in Columbus.
-  1981 – Howard opens the first McDonald's along an interstate in York.
-  1986 – Howard opens up his last McDonald's in O'Neill.
-  1987 – Howard passes away at the age of 63, leaving Kent and Dennis as owner of all four locations.
-  1993 – The West Point location opens.
-  1995 – A second Norfolk location opens.
-  2000 – The Wayne location opens.
-  2005 – Kent passes away, leaving his son Kevin in ownership of the Norfolk, O'Neill and Wayne locations. Dennis operates the Columbus, York and West Point restaurants.
-  2010 – Dennis' son Greg Hall becomes part owner and full operator of the Columbus, York and West Point locations.
-  2016 – Dennis' other son, Cory, will be approved as a full operator later this year.

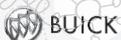
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Continued from Page 2

didn't drive all that way to go home."

So Howard, being the persistent man he was, sat in the office all day waiting.

"Evidently they liked his perseverance and granted him an interview," Dennis said.

By 1972, after a lot of training, Howard was approved to start his own McDonald's.

"Totally a leap of faith," Dennis said, remembering his father as a hard worker, visionary and perfectionist. "He just got tired of farming."

To earn company ap-

"You have to show your employees you care so that they'll care."

Dennis Hall



proval to buy into the franchise, Howard couldn't just wave stacks of cash and call it good, he needed to be trained on how to run the operation.

During the day he farmed, and at night he traveled to Lincoln, Grand Island and Kearney for his training. This lasted about four months until he was

approved as a franchisee.

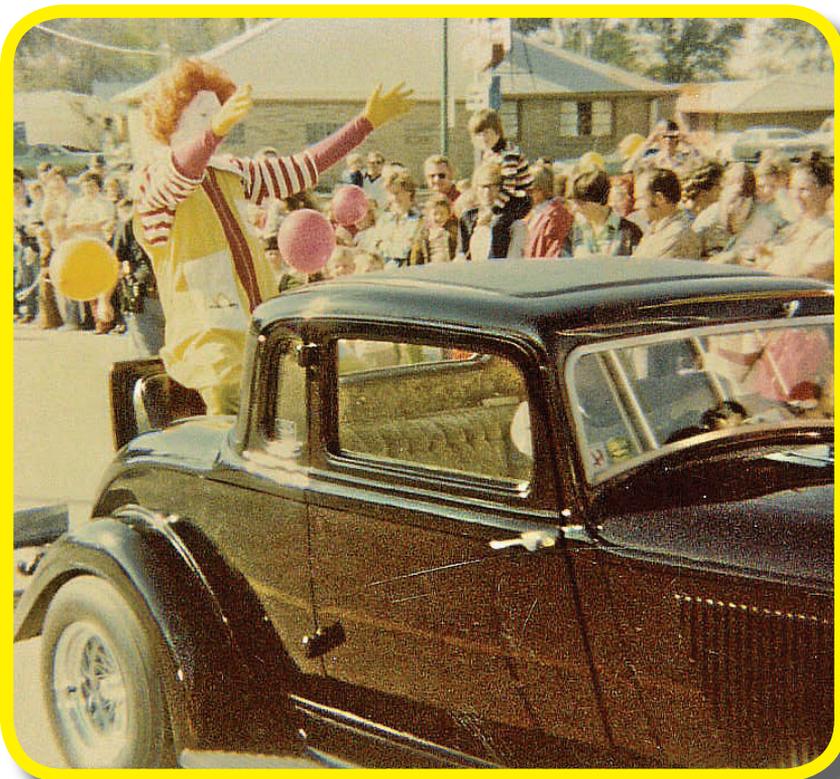
But things didn't exactly move quickly from there. Even though Howard was approved to buy a franchise, he had to wait for corporate to tell him where he could start his first McDonald's.

Finally, in 1974, two years after he finished his training, the day came when corporate told him he could build in Norfolk, about two hours north of his Exeter home.

At 50 years old, when others his age are looking forward to retirement and slowing down a bit, Howard was just getting started.

With the go-ahead from corporate, there was only one thing missing – money.

Howard and his wife Florence turned to what they had, the 720-acre farm that had been in the family for decades. They sold about a quarter of the land at \$600 an acre to get the ball rolling on the next chapter of life.



Ronald McDonald coming during the Grand Opening in September 1976.

Continued on Page 5



First day of Grand Re-Opening in 2008.

Continued from Page 4

A family affair

After watching the Norfolk location become a booming success, Howard's sons Kent and Dennis, who owned a pharmacy in Geneva, realized their father was having better luck selling hamburgers and fries than they were selling medicine.

It wasn't something they expected, but a great business opportunity nonetheless.

In 1976, the brothers

"Totally a leap of faith. He just got tired of farming."

***Dennis Hall,
remembering his father
as a hard worker,
visionary and
perfectionist.***



sold their pharmacy and jumped on the McDonald's bandwagon, helping open and run the state's first drive-thru restaurant in the state.

"I remember being this tall (measuring his hand to the floor) and pouring drinks for the drive-thru," said Dennis' oldest son Greg. "It's probably one of my first memories."

The Hall family's success didn't end there. With increased

Continued on Page 6



Continued from Page 5

recognition of the Golden Arches, demand continued to grow.

In 1981, Howard saw another open market, this time in York, which had an interstate and highway interchange and no sign of a place to eat, something almost unheard of these days.

But before Howard could build anywhere, he had to get corporate's blessing, **Continued on Page 7**

Quality control? - Mr. and Mrs. Howard Hall have supper and check on the food at their new business, McDonald's restaurant in Norfolk.

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"I asked him if he'd been looking for a job yet and he said, 'No, I want to work with you.' "

Dennis Hall, asked his son Greg after graduating college.



Continued from Page 6

something the company wasn't initially willing to dish out. Howard's idea of locating near an interstate was a little too unconventional for corporate officials to wrap their heads around.

They didn't see how a restaurant could be successful outside a city.

"After a lot of persuasion, they agreed to the location," Dennis said.

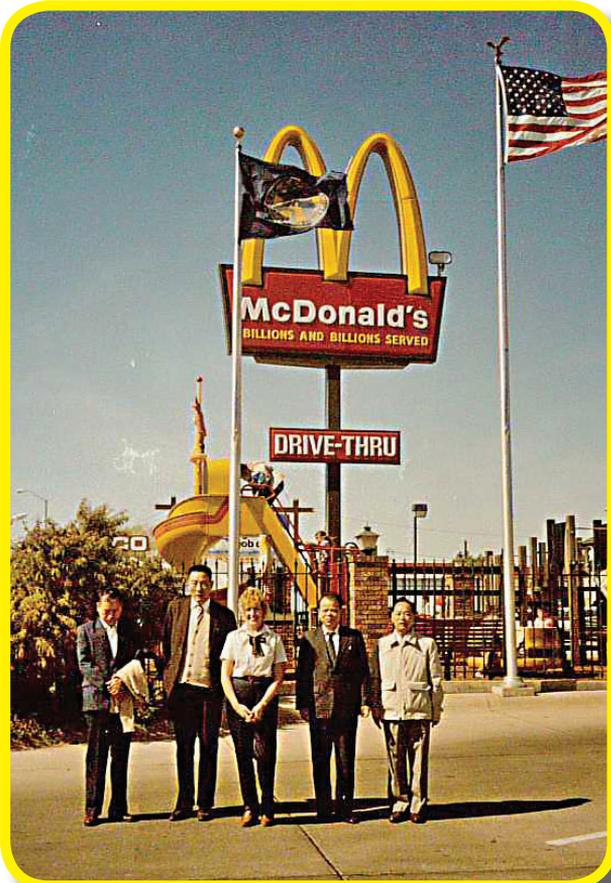
York became the first location in the country to have a McDonald's on an interstate.

Howard's vision was spot on. Within the first month, business was booming.

"Dad was a visionary to predict that the interstate would work," Dennis said.

He wasn't done there, opening another location in O'Neill in 1986.

Continued on Page 11



McDonald's Corporate sent prospective franchisees from the Republic of China to visit the store in Columbus before their expansion into mainland China.

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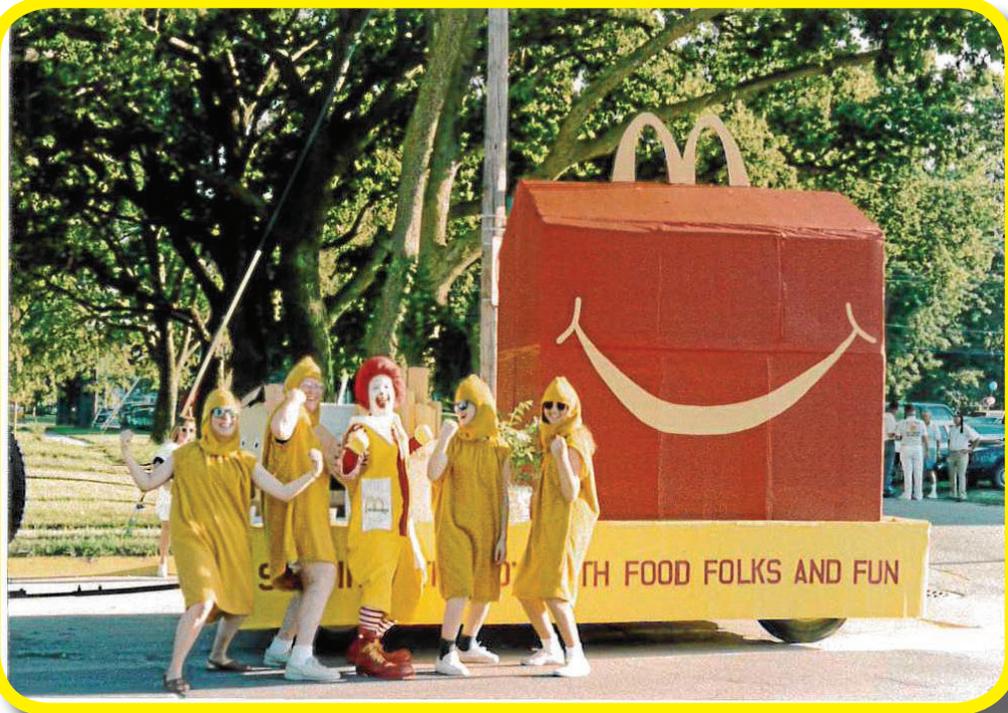


Dora May, Assistant Manager on the last day before the restaurant was torn down in 2008.

Dora May on the first day of the new store being open, making sure owner Dennis Hall is making the sandwich correctly.



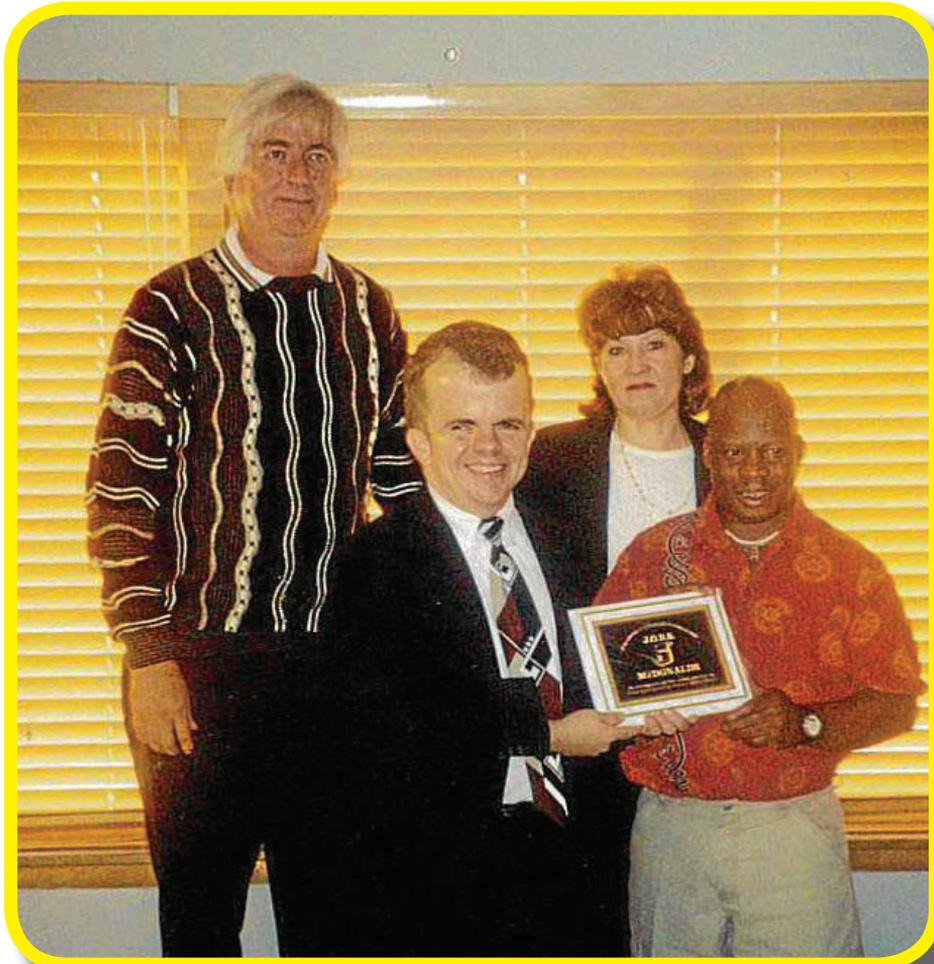
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Columbus Days float with Ronald McDonald.

Dennis & Cheryl receive an award in 2000 from J.O.B.S. for employing individuals who experience a disability.

Pictured are Dennis & Cheryl Hall with employees Scott Engdahl andarren Sledge.





Front counter in Columbus prior to the opening in 1976. The employees had to know the price of the item being ordered, punching the order into a manual NCR register, and be capable of counting back change, a lost art which is about non-existent now. On the order board were 6 breakfast items and 9 lunch & dinner items.

Prices in 1976

Breakfast	Dinner
Egg McMuffin80¢	Hamburger30¢
Hotcakes & Sausage.....90¢	Cheeseburger38¢
Scrambled Eggs & Sausage99¢	Big Mac75¢
English Muffin25¢	Quarter Pounder65¢
Danish.....35¢	Quarter Pounder with Cheese..80¢
Juice.....25¢	Fish Filet55¢
	French Fries-Small.....30¢
	French Fries-Large45¢
	Beverages - Coke
	Small25¢
	Medium35¢
	Large45¢

Continued from Page 7

But that would be his last restaurant.

In 1987, Howard could no longer watch his vision become a success as his life was quickly snatched away from him by colon cancer, leaving all four restaurants to Dennis and Kent.

As the second generation of McDonald's owners, Dennis and Kent weren't about to stop what their father worked so hard to build. They opened new locations in West Point in 1993, Norfolk in 1995 and their last McDonald's in Wayne in 2000.

"Dad was a visionary to predict that the interstate would work."

Dennis Hall



Tragedy struck the Hall family again in 2005 when Dennis' brother passed away from cancer, leaving Kent's son Kevin Hall as owner and operator of the Norfolk, O'Neill and Wayne locations.

Dennis said he didn't consider McDonald's to be a family business, per say, until 1997, when Greg graduated from college.

"I asked him if he'd been looking for a job yet and he said, 'No, I want to work with you,'" Dennis said proudly. "So I turned to Cory (Dennis' youngest son) and said, 'Well you might as well not go to school anymore either.'"

Continued on Page 12

Congratulations

to the Hall Family on the 40th Anniversary of their McDonald's franchise!

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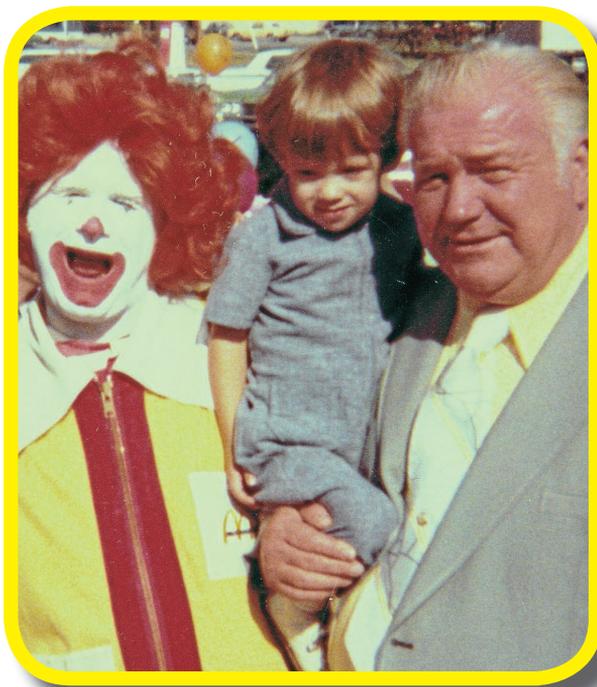
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Greg, who earned a bachelor's degree in computer engineering from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, and Cory, a sophomore at UNL majoring in business, joined forces with their father in 1997, making McDonald's in Columbus, York and West Point a third-generation family business.

"I didn't join in because it was the 'family business,'" Greg explained. "Working here just felt right. We trained like a normal employee and worked like a normal employee, there was nothing special about us. (Dad) never wanted us to be treated any different."

"It wouldn't have been right to the long-term employees," Dennis added. "I wanted them to learn from the bottom up and they did it. They worked their way up."

Having to work their way up the business ladder shows in their character. Greg, 42, and Cory,
Continued on Page 14



Original McDonald's owner Howard Hall, right, holds the current McDonald's owner Greg Hall for a picture with Ronald McDonald.

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and the
Hall family
on your 40 years in
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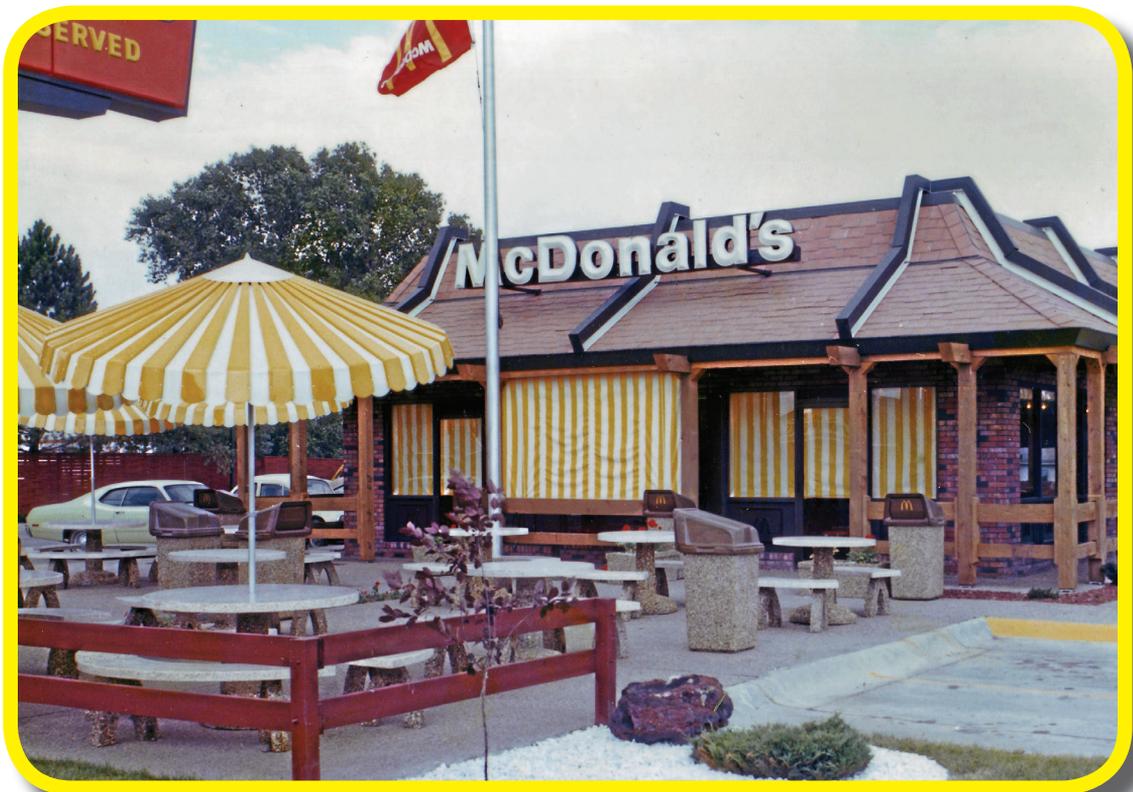
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Dennis Hall in his white suit and his wife Cheryl Hall in the red jacket pose with others for a picture in McDonaldland, a playground inside Pawnee Park donated by McDonald's.

The first McDonald's in Norfolk.



**Continued from
Page 12**

38, are hands-on bosses. Any job they expect their employees to do, from working the drive-thru to mopping up messes and even cleaning the bathrooms, they have done and will still do.

“If you treat your employees right then you will have longevity within the company,” Cory said. “Take care of your workers and they’ll take care of your customers.”

“You have to show your employees you care so that they’ll care,” Dennis added.

Greg now owns the majority of the businesses, at 51 percent, after becoming certified in 2010. Later this year Cory, who is a supervisor, will be certified to become a part owner and operator at all three locations.

“There is a long approval process,” Greg explained. “(Dad) can’t just say, ‘These are my sons, I want them to own the McDonald’s.’ You have to be verified (by corporate).”

As far as whether Greg’s two children or Cory’s three will make it a fourth-generation business, the men agreed they’re not going to pressure them into carrying on the Hall family tradition. But they’re welcome to join the McDonald’s family.

After all these years Dennis doesn’t consider the business to be a legacy, it’s simply the Hall family wanting to be a part of the community.

“We hope we have made the community a better place to live and we were able to make a



Members of the 1981 Husker football team at McDonald’s in Columbus for cystic fibrosis fundraiser. Pictured front row: Jeff Kreiji, Ric Lindquist, Mike Rozier, Turner Gill, Roger Craig, Tim Brungardt and McDonald’s manager Mike Veit. Back row: Jamie Williams and Dennis Hall.

difference in our employees’ lives in some way or another,” Dennis said. “We take a lot of pride

Continued on Page 15

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Continued from Page 14
in being McDonald's operators."

The restaurant partners with schools around Columbus, giving staff a night to get behind the counter and earn money for their classrooms.

The Halls also support area post-prom events and partner with AYSO youth soccer, giving each of the approximately 1,200 participants a coupon they can either keep or sell to cover the \$10 registration fee.

They also help put on the children's fun run as part of the Downtown Runaround by donating toys and drinks and give D.A.R.E. students coupons for free ice cream cones.

"There is a long approval process. (Dad) can't just say, 'These are my sons, I want them to own the McDonald's.' You have to be verified (by corporate)."

Greg Hall



One of the newest initiatives the Halls have taken on is teaming up with Columbus Police Department to hand out "tickets" to kids doing good deeds that can be turned in for a free ice cream cone.

"When you think McDonald's, you think kids, so it's just natural for us to want to

help out the children in our community," said Dennis' wife Cheryl, who helps organize kids' events at the restaurant.

With Dennis and Cheryl raising their two sons in Columbus and Greg and Cory planting their families' roots here, the city is not just a place where they do business, it's home.



Thank you to all of our customers and employees over the past 40 years.

*Dennis & Cheryl Hall
Greg & Kristel Hall
Cory & Karri Hall*

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— on —
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Leon Spinks, heavyweight champion in boxing, with Cheryl Hall in 2006 when he worked at McDonald's in Columbus.



Vicki Hanus (left) and Judy Anderson assembling an order in the 1980's.