

'Shop 'Til You Dine'

Borough stores, restaurants offer Wednesday promotion

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Staff Writer

WEST CHESTER — A new promotion tying store purchases to discounts at borough restaurants debuts today.

Called "Shop 'Til You Dine in West Chester," the promotion will be offered every Wednesday.

Here is how it works: You buy something at one of several participating stores whose owners have agreed to stay open until 9 p.m. Then you get a discount coupon good for a half-price drink or appetizer at more than a dozen West Chester restaurants.

Participating stores are all the Rage, Ashley & Whitney, Blink, Oh, Baby and Ruby Slippers.

Participating restaurants are Alberto's Trattoria, Baxter's, Coyote Crossing, Gilmore's, High Street Caffe, Iron Hill Brewery, Jitter's Sports Bar, Kildare's, Market Street Grille, New York Sandwiches, Ryan's Pub, Spence Café, Teca, Turks Head Inn and Vincent's.

The idea is the brainchild of Chester County restaurateur Jack McFadden, whose friend Tom Comitta, a West Chester town planner and landscape architect, saw a similar promotion in action during a recent visit to Charleston, S.C.

Wednesday is a slow night for restaurants, according to McFadden, who owns Turks Head Inn in West Chester and The Gables in Pennsbury.

"We're trying to get more people into town, especially during the summer," McFadden said.

"This idea is relatively new but it's becoming more common," said Luke VanBellegem, program associate with the National Main Street Center in Washington, D.C., a small-town economic development resource center with an



Jack McFadden, left, owner of West Chester's Turks Head Inn, and Dave Magrogan, owner of Kildare's, promote "Shop 'Til You Dine." People can make a purchase at a participating store on Wednesday nights and receive a discount card for participating restaurants.

interest in historic preservation.

Van Bellegem cited as examples the Common Man Restaurant in Ashland, N.H., which encourages patrons to visit the artists' cooperative across the street while they wait for a table; a Frederick, Md., skateboard shop that teams up with a brew pub down the street to offer parents discount drinks during promotional events for their kids, and restaurant chefs in Springfield, Ill., who host cook-

ing demonstrations using ingredients from local growers.

Said David Magrogan, who owns Kildare's and serves as president of the West Chester Restaurant Association, "We're already pretty busy on Thursday, Friday and Saturday nights but we want to be busy earlier in the week."

Kildare's will sell for half-price all appetizers on its menu when a customer presents a discount card, and will offer Aspen Edge, the new low-carbohydrate beer, for \$2 a bottle.

The owners of the borough's largest women's specialty shop will sit out this promotion.

Said Kathryn "Kiki" Comerford, who owns Jane Chalfant and the Kiki Boutique in the 100 block of North High Street with husband, Pat, "We decided not to participate this time. We're already staying open late for First Fridays," during which many borough stores and art galleries remain open late the first Friday of every month.

"If we did this, we'd have a

staffing issue," Comerford added.

Elysa Biles, who owns Blink, is taking a different tack. "We'll give this a try because we want to support downtown's revival," she said. "There are lots of cool restaurants in town now and we're located in the middle between several of them."

Biles will keep the store open herself, rather than hiring someone to do so. "I want to see how this works, so I'll stick around," she said.

Staff photo by Stacy Zaferes