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First Certified Dinner-Assembly Store in Suffolk County Growing by Dollars, not Pounds

Smithtown, NY - It's the end of a long day, you've been rushing to make business deadlines or rushing to class or running the kids from one activity to another, or maybe all of the above, and now the question is – what's for dinner? Entrepreneurs Karen Boyle and Donna Schukal, owners of Whats4Dinner, Inc., have the answer for Suffolk County residents.

Like most busy professionals, Boyle and Schukal considered time a rare commodity. Both worked in corporate positions– which excited neither of them– and they found managing their time outside of the office challenging. Their schedules typically did not allow time for meal planning, food shopping, and cooking and cleaning up every night. So in 2005 they began searching for a solution, which for them had to include healthier alternatives than fast food and or sometimes unhealthy restaurant meals. They finally devised the concept of providing individualized service to people with demanding schedules including a do-it-yourself, meal-preparation center that would be affordable, convenient and of fine-restaurant quality.

Within a month Boyle and Schukal incorporated Whats4Dinner and continued working at their full-time corporate positions. In an effort to go full-bore with their new enterprise they sited and leased a commercial space just off the heavily trafficked Smithtown Bypass. Over the next year, with the help of an SBA-guaranteed \$200,000 loan from Commerce Bank, they renovated the facility which included their “assembly-ready kitchen.” According to the owners, upon completion of health department standards in April 2007, Whats4Dinner became the first certified dinner-assembly store in Suffolk County.

Customers can order week's worth of portion-controlled meals online or visit the store, where they are provided with various recipes and all the necessary items to prepare meals. They get nutritionally balanced, healthy food while saving on shopping, cookbook look-ups and clean up. Over 98 percent of their ingredients are purchased from local food suppliers and vendors, ensuring fresh and simple meals that can be served in a timely manner. A testament to the owners' business philosophy that a person's diet should be tailored to fit their lifestyle needs, sales grew by 85 percent over the first year and continue to grow each month.

In addition to turning a profit, Boyle and Schukal regularly donate food and food-baskets to local Island charities including the Lt. Thomas Healy Foundation, Good Shepherd Hospice, Babylon Breast Cancer Fund, Doctors without Borders, the Stony Brook Pediatric Oncology and Helping Hands. They are supporters of the Smithtown Chamber of Commerce and are on the advisory boards for the Friends for Life Foundation and Suffolk County Women's Business Enterprise Coalition. They also participate in health and wellness fairs at local schools, and conduct healthy meal preparation demonstrations at social events.

Hard work, careful planning and determination paid off for the duo. According to Boyle and Schukal, "We've been able to successfully reach our goals and help our community at the same time with the help of the SBA and business plan counseling from the Stony Brook Small Business Development Center."

For further information, visit www.whats4dinnerinc.com or stop by the kitchen located at 737 Smithtown Bypass.

–by DeAnn Misilmeri

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