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# Maui Wowi gives shoppers tastes of Hawaii

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NASHUA – You might not be able to swing that trip to tropical Hawaii this year, but you can console yourself with a fresh fruit smoothie drink at a nearby Maui Wowi stand.

If you live in southern New Hampshire you're in luck because there are three in the area: at the Pheasant Lane Mall, the Rockingham Park Mall in Salem and the Mall of New Hampshire in Manchester.

The one at the Pheasant Lane Mall is just outside the foot court, where there is an additional dining area.

Maui Wowi is a Colorado-based franchise that has Tiki hut-like kiosks where fresh fruit, nonfat yogurt-based smoothie drinks as well as espressos, cappuccinos, lattes, mochas and hot chocolate are sold. The newest offering is a frozen fruit and yogurt treat called Smoothie RipSticks.

Richard Diorio, owner of all three area stands, wanted his own business for a while, and began investigating different possibilities.

While attending a trade show, he met Paul Martel of the Entrepreneur's Source, which helps people find a franchise that fits them and their pocketbook.

"I checked out a number of different businesses, like a painting business based in Philadelphia, but nothing really seemed right," Diorio said. "I told him, and he said, well, I just found out about something called Maui Wowi."

Diorio said he looked into the company and six weeks after first talking to



**Staff photo by Kevin Jacobus**

Richard Diorio, owner of Maui Wowi, mixes a smoothie for customer Alma Ballota of Lexington, Mass., at the Pheasant Lane Mall, the location of one of three franchises he operates in New Hampshire malls. Maui Wowi specializes in mixed fruit and frozen yogurt smoothies.

Michael Haith, Maui Wowi's president and chief executive officer, he signed on.

In September, he opened his first stand at the Rockingham Park Mall, then in May he opened one at the Mall of New Hampshire and in June, the third debuted at the Pheasant Lane Mall.

"The product is great, everything we use is natural. The base of the smoothies are fat-free yogurt and we use nothing but fresh fruit, which really makes a difference in how they taste," he said. "And it's fun, people go out of their way to purposely visit us."

Diorio has 14 people working for him, but he has kept his day job as a high-tech worker despite the fact the stands are doing pretty well. After all, the business doesn't even have a full year under its belt.

"The crew has been great, they have a lot of fun and enjoy themselves," he said. The workers dress in Hawaiian shirts and put paper parasols in each drink as they stand at a Tiki hut-like kiosk, complete with a surfboard.

The franchise, based in Littleton, Colo., is now 20 years old and following an aggressive growth path. In 2001 alone, the company added 74 more locations run by 40 new owners and projects it will add another 1,000 kiosks by the end of 2004.

"We get 75 requests for information a day and 40 franchisee applications a week. We have endured because we offer a simple, trouble-free, low-risk franchise opportunity that allows flexibility and a quick return on investment," Haith said.

Diorio said it is easy to operate, and the support he receives from Maui Wowi is very good.

"We don't do a lot of other things. It allows us to focus on what we do best, making great drinks," Diorio said.

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