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## Dixie Highway bar reopens as Buzzard Bay Pub

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By Eric Robinette

Staff Writer

**FAIRFIELD** — The restaurant/bar on the hill at the intersection of Dixie Highway and Mack Road has gone through more identities than a CIA agent.

In the last few years it has been known as Charlie's Throttle Stop, Win Place or Show, and most recently, America Live.

Now, the venue lives again as the Buzzard Bay Pub, overseen by a man who helped run it during one of its more successful guises, Arnie's, in the late 1980s and early 1990s. That's Kevin Brandt, who has experience running several nightclubs. Operating the food side is Joe Krach, who ran the Bridgewater Falls Chili's over the last six years, making it one of the highest-grossing locations in Ohio, Indiana and Kentucky, he said.

Buzzard Bay had its soft opening in March and plans to have a grand opening this month. The venue had received national attention on the TV show "Bar Rescue," which turned it into America Live in 2012. However, even the efforts of that reality show could not save it, and it closed within a few months.

The venue has a long, tangled history, according to Brandt. Originally, in the early '80s it was a Cracker Barrel-style restaurant called EZ Pickens. It did well at first, but closed by the mid-80s. In 1985, Brandt came in for the first time when it was a nightclub known as Safari. In the late 1980s, it became Arnie's, and that guise lasted until 1995, when the lease expired.

Brandt left the industry for awhile to have a family, then he entered the corporate world. When that ran its course, he decided to invest in his old venue again.

"I had to create my own job. The economy's not looking for people like me," he said.

"When it was Arnie's, our logo was a buzzard. We had buzzard wings, buzzard skins, buzzard fries, buzzard ribs. I wanted to connect to the past but I didn't want to recreate Arnie's ... The buzzard could connect to our old Buzzard, or we rebranded to Buzzard Bay today," he said.

Buzzard Bay offers typical bar fare like wings, but it also wants to stand out by offering lighter, more exotic dishes like fish tacos, said Krach. Like Brandt, Krach had been there during the Arnie's days. Krach's concept is that the seafood ties into the beach theme.

"A little lighter, a little brighter, I guess would be the best way to say it," he said. "We're taking it in a different direction it's been in the last 10 years."

Brandt concurred, saying, "We've done a lot of physical changes here. We still have more to do. I think people will find it very welcoming ... There's been some good, some bad and some ugly here, but we're going to focus on the good."

The new lease is for five years, with an option to buy, he said. It is open from 11 a.m to midnight Monday through Thursday; 11 a.m. to 1 a.m. on Friday; noon to 1 a.m. on Saturday; and noon to midnight on Sunday.

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