

It's all in the family at El Patron

By CRAIG MURPHY
Of the Keizertimes

Carlos Pineda wasn't too picky when looking for a possible location for a restaurant.

Pineda and his wife Miriam knew they wanted to open a Mexican restaurant somewhere in the Keizer area.

Pineda's family owns a meat shop and market in Woodburn and he's a carpenter by trade. Thus, he was willing to turn about any building into a restaurant. He opened El Patron Mexican Restaurant at 3844 River Road North in the Keizer Village shopping center on March 3.

"I wanted to make sure there was a hood already dug out for the grease to go," Pineda said. "As long as I had the hood, I was ready for any project."

As it turns out, Pineda didn't have much work to do after he found a Mexican restaurant that was already open, Salsa Rica.

"This was already made," Pineda said of the location, which is next to Goodwill. "A friend of the family had this before. We walked in and were just so persistent. We worked out a deal. I told him it's perfect. It had everything I wanted."

Pineda liked what Juan and Elsa Fernandez had done with the building, including the inside decorations. Thus, most of the items in El Patron were in place before, with Pineda adding a few personal touches like a hanging cowboy hat and a

couple of horse head statues. A bent horse head makes up the "P" in the sign.

"My dad is big time into the Western theme, with big som-breros. I've always liked horses. The guy I bought it from was very Western," said Pineda, who convinced Fernandez to leave the picture frames and benches with wagon wheels behind. "Then I added some of my stuff and my wife has some things. It goes with the Western style."

Pineda wanted to steer away from the usual look.

"I didn't want it to look like your traditional Mexican restaurant," he said. "I wanted customers to walk into a clean, different place. You come in here and feel like it's clean."

Opening the restaurant was the culmination of an idea the Pinedas had been tossing around for a while.

"It's been lingering in the back of our heads for two or three years," Pineda said. "About seven months ago we said we need to do something for ourselves. I knew that's what I wanted to do at some point."

As soon as he owned the restaurant, Pineda had it closed for one day of transition.

"The first thing I did was change the name," Pineda said. "I knew that's the name I wanted, using the design of the horse. I couldn't get it out of my head."



KEIZERTIMES/Craig Murphy
Miriam and Carlos Pineda inside their new Keizer restaurant, El Patron.

Pineda uses many of his mom's recipes and works alongside Miriam.

"It's definitely challenging," Pineda said of working with his wife, who worked for a lawyer for six years previously. "It's definitely different to work with my wife, because we're co-workers here. That was an interesting transition, to work

together. It was interesting at first, but we have a good system."

El Patron is open seven days a week, from 11 a.m. to 8 p.m. Monday through Thursday and 10 a.m. to 9 p.m. Friday through Sunday. Hours may be expanded in the summer. To-go orders can be called in at 503-339-7732.

Death penalty debate comes to Keizer June 12

Oregonians for Alternatives to the Death Penalty (OADP) host its 2015 annual meeting, dinner and program Friday, June 12, at the Keizer Civic Center.

This year's keynote speaker will be Mike Farrell, a political and social activist best known for his portrayal of Army Capt. B.J. Hunnicutt in the TV-series *M*A*S*H* and Dr. Jim Hansen in the weekly NBC series *Providence*. Farrell is the president of Death Penalty Focus, a grassroots organizing group, comparable to OADP, seeking alternatives to the death penalty in California.

Oregonians for Alternatives to the Death Penalty promotes discussion on Oregon's death penalty and favors programs that demonstrate evidenced-based outcomes to deter crime, violence and murder.

A reception with guest speakers will take place starting at 5 p.m. Individual tickets are \$40 and tables of eight can be reserved by calling (503) 990-7060. Tickets are also available online by going to www.oadp.org. Dinner will start at 6 p.m. and the program for the evening will follow. The Keizer Civic Center is located at 930 Chemawa Rd. NE.

Sign up soon for choir, drama camps

Keizer students interested in singing and acting can sign up now for the annual McNary Area Choir and Drama Camps.

Camps are open to students entering fourth through ninth grades and run July 13 through 17.

"We are in our sixth season of running the camps and each year the attendance just keeps growing," said Andy Thomas, Whiteaker choir director and one of the staff at the camps.

Last year, the camps reached 150 participants and had 13 instructors and assistants between the two camps, the most yet.

The choir portion runs from 9 a.m. to noon and the drama camp runs from 12:30 to 3 p.m.

Kids are welcome to participate in just one of the camps or both, but one feeds into the other.

Participants will get to work with Jim Taylor, choir director at McNary High school, Thomas, three McNary choir graduates and Angy Thomas, a middle school drama specialist

Drama camp exposes participants to teamwork, imagination, voice, pantomime and many other aspects of the theatre.

Registration forms are available from music teachers at each Keizer school, at McNary High School office, the Whiteaker main office, and via e-mail at thomas_andy@salkeiz.k12.or.us.

Registrations are due by June 5. Cost is \$65 per camp which includes a camp T-shirt and all materials.

Bark for Life June 20 at Keizer Rapids

Bark for Life an event for dogs and their owners will be held at Keizer Rapids Park on Saturday, June 20, to raise funds for the American Cancer Society.

The event, scheduled from 8 a.m. to noon, will feature a one mile/5K fun run/walk for dogs and their owners.

After the run/walk the day will feature demonstrations, a silent auction, a doggie fashion show, games and food. Past participants have dressed

their dogs in costumes.

For information visit the Bark for Life website at bflofsalemkeizer.com.

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