

Oishi thanks Central Oregon by giving back

By Ceili Cornelius
Correspondent

Oishi Japanese Restaurant is celebrating its sixth year in Redmond by giving back to a family in need.

Tanankam Thanitithanand, known as Yee, is the owner of Oishi and fell in love with Central Oregon six years ago when she and her family visited. Oishi serves traditional Japanese food. They have a variety of hot foods including noodles, udon and rice dishes as an alternative for those who do not eat fish. Sushi, rolls and sashimi are their main focus.

Originally from Santa Barbara, Yee and her partner Barbara, Yee and her partner Preecha (Peter) and his wife Naruemon (Molly) Stephen owned and worked in Thai and Japanese restaurants in Southern California, mainly Monterey Park. Yee and her partners visited friends in Bend who had opened a Thai restaurant and fell in love with the area.

“We wanted to get out of the big city, and our friends told us to take a look at Redmond, and we fell in love with the quiet town,” said Yee.

They returned a few months later and made appointments to look into buying the building they are in now that was previously an Italian restaurant and turn it into their own Japanese restaurant. At first, they were considering opening a Thai restaurant, but realized there wasn't much in the market for Japanese restaurants in the area. They were told by others around the community when they moved up that people might not like sushi and wouldn't want to try it, based on the location and style of the town, but they have been successful since their first day of business.

The restaurant has become

a popular destination for many in Sisters.

The kitchen staff made the move up to Central Oregon with Yee and her partners. Some of them worked in both their Thai and Japanese restaurants and wanted to move out of the city to Central Oregon.

“We said if anyone wanted to move with us they could, and most did and packed up and made the move with us,” Yee said.

“We wanted to give back to the community in some way and this is how we have done it.”

Some of her staff works in the kitchen for the hot food menu; the specially trained sushi chefs are originally from Southern California. Yee's partner, Peter, trained the sushi chefs and his wife, Molly, works primarily with the kitchen staff.

They mostly hired local people to fill out their staff once they got to Redmond.

“It took about six months to get everything ready for us and we did it all ourselves and together because we had our family of staff,” Yee said.

They knew that Redmond was a relatively quiet town, but their first day of business was a booming success.

“We thought we were ready and had experience, but we had problems with the electrical power system with such an old building, so we ran out of food on the first day of business,” she said.

“We love what the community has done for us and we try to give back as much as we can,” Yee noted.

This generosity toward the community from the restaurant comes in the form of choosing a child in need to

have a fundraiser for each year to give back to the community.

Oishi reached out to customer and Redmond local, Toni Rich, who has connections in the community, about how to find children who are in need. Usually it is for children with disabilities and medical bills.

Every year for the past six years the restaurant has hosted a fundraising event with the donated time of local musician Bill Keale. Proceeds from the day are donated and there is a silent auction and a donation jar in the restaurant where customers can donate cash or checks directly to the chosen child.

This year's selected child is Gavin, who suffers from Lennox Gasteau Syndrome, which is childhood epilepsy; as well as ADHD and symptoms of Asperger's. He has



PHOTO BY CEILI CORNELIUS

The staff at Oishi Japanese Restaurant largely moved from California. The restaurant has become popular with diners across the region.

had a number of medical procedures, and his family struggles with paying the bills. On July 3, the sixth anniversary of Oishi, they will be donating all of the sales on that day to help Gavin's family along with the donations from throughout the month.

“We wanted to give back to the community in some

way and this is how we have done it. Business(es) around Redmond also help out a lot with this fundraiser and it is getting bigger and bigger every year,” she said.

Yee and her partners love being in Central Oregon and plan to keep up the good work at their restaurant and continue to grow.

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LET'S GIVE TO GAVIN

Hi, my name is Gavin and I am 10 years old. I have two younger brothers and two younger sisters.

When I was 2 years old I started running high fevers that led to seizures. At the age of 6, I would have 10 to 15 seizures per day and I regressed in my global development. I was diagnosed with Lennox Gasteau Syndrome — which is childhood epilepsy — and ADHD with symptoms of Asperger's. The doctors implanted a VNS which sends electrical charges to my brain, but I still have at least one seizure a day.

I am nearsighted and have no depth perception, so it is difficult for me to throw or catch a ball. I love to swim and enjoy recess at school.

Wednesday, July 3, Oishi celebrates its 6th Anniversary
OISHI WILL DONATE ALL OF THE SALES ON THAT DAY TO HELP GAVIN'S FAMILY

Bill Keale has donated his time & talent. Contribution jar is on the counter, and silent auction bidding is underway. *Please be part of this heart-warming event!*