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Coffee Talk: **Bear Claw Coffee**



Chelsea-based Bear Claw Coffee, owned by Debi and Doug Scroggins, boasts 17 Michigan locations with more on the way. They are in a growth phase and really excited about it. Reuters reported yesterday, Starbucks is planning to open 40,000 stores worldwide (half of them in the US). This kind of conquest doesn't fit on a Risk gameboard.

I spoke with Debi, Bear Claw's president, this morning about the company's plans for expansion, her take on the Michigan economy and how she interprets Starbucks expansion. Debi is definitely a cup-half-full kind of person. She said that the Starbucks announcement is highly motivating and that Starbucks has "espresso educated" the public. "We love Starbucks, but they cannot compete with small business. It is easier for us to introduce new menu items. We can change on a dime," said Scroggins.

Founded in 2002, the original concept for the company was to have 4 or 5 drive-through locations. Since then, the company has grown through franchising. Scroggins sees competitive advantage in the owner/operator aspect of franchising. "Our staff is trained to have a personal interaction with you, to remember your name and what you like to drink."

Bear Claw Coffee, an active member of the International Franchise Association, participates in MinorityFran and VetFran, two initiatives geared toward diversifying franchise opportunities.

GayFranchise.com is also collaborating with Bear Claw Coffee. Scroggins said, "It is a chance to reach out to the gay community and let them know we are very inclusive. It's a huge market. It's good business."

While Bear Claw is Michigan-based with an "up north" styled brand identity, they are looking to expand next into Tennessee, Florida and Illinois.

About the condition of Michigan's economy, Scroggins believes Michigan's hope for economic renewal rests with her people. "We have a midwestern work ethic; we're hard workers. We will come back," she said.

When asked for encouraging words for aspiring Michigan entrepreneurs Scroggins said, "Look for start up help. There are a huge amount of programs out there. Get on the internet. Go to the library. Do your homework."

And, drink some coffee.

Posted by CEW at 12:02 PM

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