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Tuesday, January 09, 2007

New Super 8 motel grand opening showcases 30,000-foot building

By James Pletcher Jr., Herald-Standard
10/16/2002

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Although the per night rate is higher than when the chain opened in the 1970s, officials for the new Super 8 Motel in Uniontown say they have the same philosophy: clean, comfortable and affordable rooms for the traveler.

On Tuesday, the motel on Route 40 west in the county-owned business park held a grand opening for members of the community as well as the Fayette Chamber of Commerce.

The event showcased the new hostelry, a three-story, 30,000-square-foot building that offers guests a host of amenities, ranging from microwave ovens and refrigerators in each of its 61 rooms to an in-house laundry and complementary breakfast.

"We opened this for several reasons," said Gerry Caulfield of Morgantown, one of the owners. "With the extension of Route 43 (the Mason/Dixon Link into West Virginia to tie into Interstate 68 at Morgantown), the location of Uniontown and the traffic to Pittsburgh, we felt this was a good choice."

The motel represents a \$2.5 million investment and will employ about a dozen people. Cheree Vokes of Mount Pleasant is the general manager.

She explained how the famous name came to be.

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"In the very beginning, when the motel started out, they wanted to offer clean and affordable rooms that were inexpensive. The rate was \$8 a night," she said.

The standard rate for a room today, she added, is \$61.88 weekdays. Super 8 offers senior citizen, American Automobile Association and Super 8 VIP discounts.

Vokes said the motel opened in July, and business so far "has been very good.

"We have been very busy on every weekend so far, and even though it's October, we are still busy during the week as well. I made a few calls (to area business and organizations) to let them know we were open, but most of our traffic has been separate from that. We have already had some return guests and a lot of walk-ins."

When asked why he opened the hotel in Uniontown, Caulfield joked, "To make money."

But he added this is a "good transient market."

A quick view of license plates in the parking lot on Tuesday showed guests from Texas, Alabama, Florida and Illinois, as well as Pennsylvania.

Caulfield began putting up Super 8s in the 1970s when the chain was founded in Aberdeen, Texas, his home. He migrated to the mid-Atlantic region, "where we developed 46 Super 8s," and later became involved in owning motels rather than building them.

"We have five motels in West Virginia," he said, which are owned by a variety of partners. They include Holiday Inn Express and Super 8 brands.

"We build our motels in business areas rather than tourist areas. We cater to the business traveler. He is our bread and butter," Caulfield said.

He added that business has been good for the motels because of their interstate sites.

While rooming levels fell for hotels located in primary destinations - Florida, New York and other major attractions - because of last year's terrorist attacks, "we have been holding up very well," Caulfield said.

"I think this thing in Bali, (another terrorist attack) will also stop a lot of people from traveling overseas."

T&J Construction built the local motel in a little less than a year. Caulfield said he dealt with Ray Polaski, Fayette County Redevelopment Authority executive director, in securing the site.

"He is a very good man to work with," he said.

For more information on the motel, its rates and services, call 724-425-0261.

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