

Customers find friends and family at The Oasis

By LIZ NEWBURG

Staff writer

BRISTOL — There's a reason Oasis restaurant won the "Best of Bristol" for breakfast spots and it's a far sweeter reason than just the homemade pancakes and waffles they serve up daily. Because this local eatery creates a feeling like home, customers and staff feel like an extended family. And that is something you'd be hard-pressed to find at a national chain establishment, according to Oasis manager Christos Theodoropoulos.

It was obvious one morning, as Theodoropoulos shared information with a couple about the restaurant's upcoming Thanksgiving dinner. The couple, it turns out, has been coming to this local eatery for 17 years and have watched Theodoropoulos grow from a boy cleaning tables to the young man helping run the family business.

Waitress Susan Bolesta, who has been with Oasis for 17 years, said the owners are like her second family. She has watched Christos Theodoropoulos grow up in the restaurant owned by his father Andy and Uncle Bill Theodoropoulos.



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From left are Susan Bolesta, a waitress at the restaurant for 17 years, Christos Theodoropoulos, who is manager and son and nephew of the owners Andy and Bill Theodoropoulos, and Binky, a waitress at Oasis for 22 years.

"I know all their likes and dislikes and all their quirks," Bolesta said. "Christos is like a son to me."

The restaurant opened 22 years ago April, sprung from a combination of hard work, determination and dream of the two Theodoropoulos brothers.

"My father and uncle are used to hard work, living off the land in Greece," Christos Theodoropoulos said. "They came to New York from Greece in the '70s and started working in diners as dishwashers and slowly worked their way up,

immersed themselves in the business, doing everything they could until they were able to get a place like this together."

Today, Oasis serves up breakfast, lunch and dinner, featuring a banquet room that seats 50 people and is booked every day for special functions. Christos Theodoropoulos said the restaurant can make family-style dinners, pizza buffets or open menu selection for that special occasion.

"There's no charge for booking the room," he said. "We have a lot of local clubs

booking the room for their meetings, including the Lions Club and car clubs. We can do whatever the customer wants for catering. We always try to help them out."

What makes the food stand out at Oasis is that it is made fresh daily, including bread that they sell hot out of the oven for \$1.

"We try to make everything homemade," Christos Theodoropoulos said. "From the corned beef hash to the salads to the authentic Greek specialties like moussaka and spanikopita and pastitsio that my father and uncle will come in and make fresh."

The family's Greek tradition also showed through during the freak Oct. 29 snow storm that caused wide-spread power outages the likes of which Connecticut has never seen.

The Theodoropoulos family pitched in nearly around the clock to keep the restaurant running to feed people lining up outside its doors desperate just for a hot cup of coffee. The restaurant, unlike many in the state, only lost power for about 30 hours, according to Christos Theodoropoulos.

"It was all hands on deck here," he said. "We were crazy busy because we were the only place open. We had a two-

hour wait for a table with a line going out the door. Strangers were sitting together just to get a seat. Customers were helping clear tables, pouring their own coffee."

After the doors closed, Christos Theodoropoulos stayed until 4 a.m. with the other chefs to prepare for the next day.

"People came in when it was all over and said thank you for staying open," he said. "They really appreciated the effort. And that's what sets us apart from everyone else. When people are hungry they come here first."

Oasis is located at 782 Pine St. and is open 7 a.m. to 9 p.m. every day. It will offer a traditional Thanksgiving dinner menu Thursday from noon to 9 p.m.

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