Lower Commons refuels for 2008

By Jessica Levine
GVL Staff Writer

Funky, fresh and recently finished for fall semester, Grand Valley State University's Fuel provides a chic, kick-back atmosphere to eat and hang out.

Formerly known as Lower Commons and located on the Allendale Campus, Fuel was renovated as one of GVSU's 161 construction projects initiated during the summer of 2008. The refurbished Fuel is open and ready to offer students new variety and healthier culinary choices.

Serving Papa John's pizza, Bleeker Street sandwiches, soups and salads, Jump Asian Cuisine and Energy Zone smoothies and juices, Fuel is receiving positive customer feedback, said Deb Rambadt, marketing manager of GVSU's Campus Dining.

"People are learning about what's available, and I think people are just discovering it," she said. "We're still in the discovery mode."

Rambadt hopes as students and staff members settle in for the school year, they will become more aware of Fuel and the variety it has to offer. The primary focus currently is to increase awareness, which will in turn increase the number of customers, she said.

Claire Helakoski, GVSU sophomore, already enjoys the food selection.

"I think the choices are really good," she said. "I like the variety. I could hardly use all of my meals last year, so I didn't want to pay for a meal that I already had." Until this year, the Lower Commons did not offer meal plan combinations and only accepted Debit Dollars, cash and credit. Now at Bleeker Street, a casual dining deli, students have the option to make a meal combination.

"The sandwiches are really good and it is different from Subway," said GV Sophomore Taylor Rickelmann.

Offering more options was central to Fuel's redesign. By providing additional selections and accommodating business hours, customers will have more freedom on when and what to eat.

Fuel opens at 7:30 a.m. for breakfast and customers from Fresh Food Company and Einstein Brother's Bagels - located on the second floor - can now head downstairs for an equally filling breakfast option.

"We're doing a respectable business, (but) we would like to increase the foot traffic ... We have the capacity to handle more, so we're looking for ways to promote that," Rambadt said. "I think part of it is that people are just not aware that we're open that early."

Starting the day with breakfast and offering healthy lunch and dinner choices later in the day was the original plan. With the variety of restaurant options, students are no longer stuck with high-fat fast food.

"We made some effort to put things where people could choose to have healthier items," Rambadt said. "For example, with Jump, you have the ability to create your own stir-fry, so when you take control of that menu item as a guest - maybe you want tofu or all veggies - options in that sense are more available."

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Chic study spot: GVSU juniors Sara Stein and Leon Cerdena enjoy the recently renovated lower commons area.

American Physical Therapy Association as well, encouraging cultural diversity among our students.

Managing Editor