Written by Kristel Whitty-Ersan
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Happy Joe's is gearing up for a huge 40th anniversary celebration! The Happy Joe's company was founded November 16, 1972, and the first location opened in the Village of East Davenport. Founder of Happy Joe's, Lawrence Joseph Whitty, began his career as a baker. He later began working for a pizza chain and was convinced he could make improvements on their product. When they weren't interested, Joe's wife Sandie encouraged him to pursue his dreams of opening his own restaurant. Joe remembered seeing patrons at his previous job leave the restaurant and walk down the street for ice cream. That gave Joe the idea to combine pizza and ice cream into one restaurant concept. Joe's daughter Julie came up with the now famous name of Happy Joe's, and the rest is history. Joe never dreamed he would have more than one restaurant, but Happy Joe's now spans over 6 states with nearly 60 locations. Happy Joe's has become a family tradition and is well known by its two signature pizzas, The Happy Joe's Special (with Canadian bacon and sauerkraut which Joe invented in the kitchen of one of his relatives homes using leftovers), and the infamous Taco Pizza which Joe created in response to a franchisee's request to add tacos to the menu.

Happy Joe's is not only known for its pizza and menu products, but for the good work they do in their communities. The company has a stellar reputation for giving back and Joe has dedicated the company to a variety of causes, mainly those that revolve around children with special needs.

In honor of the company's 40th anniversary, Happy Joe's has launched the Happy Joe's Kids Foundation. The foundation is dedicated to improving the lives of children with special needs, as well as their families and the groups that support them. This is a national foundation and the family hopes it will be a legacy to Joe's passion for children with special needs.

Fundraising efforts have already kicked off with a variety of events. The biggest and most exciting are just around the corner. The Happy Joe's Special Needs party will host over 1,000 children November 14th at the iWireless Center. The children are invited at no cost and it is Happy Joe's gift to them. Joe Whitty stated, "We do this party every year, but for our 40th we are making it even bigger. It is my favorite day of the year and the best Christmas present I could ever get is seeing these kids and how much fun they have at our party."

On November 16th Happy Joe's will host the inaugural Ladies Precious Luncheon at the Waterfront Convention Center in Bettendorf. Doors open at 11am. There will be a jewelry show and renowned speaker Mary LoVerde will be the keynote speaker. Tickets are $45 and proceeds will benefit the Happy Joe's Kids Foundation.

November 19th will be the Happy Joe's Tribute Dinner which will celebrate the lives of some very important people in the special needs community, as well as be a tribute to Happy Joe Whitty and his good works. Tickets are $100 per seat and doors open at 5pm. There will also be a silent auction. All proceeds will benefit the Happy Joe's Kids Foundation.

Finally, November 20th at the Blackhawk Hotel at 7:30 am there will be a Fully Roasted Cup of Joe breakfast. This is a full-on roast of Happy Joe Whitty. After 40 years in business, join us to kick the beans out of the big guy!

For information on any of these events or to purchase tickets, contact the Happy Joe's Support Center 563-332-8811. You can also register online www.happyjoeskids.org and click on the events tab.

What does Happy Joe have to say about all of this? “I would like to thank all of our loyal guests, franchisees, and team members for their dedication and commitment to Happy Joe's. There is no way we would have made it to 40 years without all of you! I’m amazed and proud how my staff has rallied to pull all of these events together. It is an exciting time and I’m proud that we have been able to launch a new foundation that I know will do a lot of good.”

If you would like more information, please contact Kristel Whitty-Ersan at 563.332.8811, Ext. 203, or via e-mail at kristele@happyjoes.com.

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