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## Man who wished for school supplies gives other chance to have them

Jeff Lin donates \$1000 to provide for children in need

By PAULA BARR/Daily Journal Staff Writer

Jul 5, 2006



Paula Barr / Daily Journal Jeff Lin plans to show his thanks to the community on Saturday, when he donates the first \$1,000 of the day's profits at his restaurant, First Wok, to be used to buy school supplies. Lin is grateful to church members and customers who provided clothing, books and school supplies to his daughter Megan when the restaurant was struggling.

When Jeff Lin was growing up in south China, he wished he had nice clothes and supplies for school. But it cost a lot of money for a basic education, and his family was poor.

His parents both worked and managed to pay for Lin and one of his siblings to finish high school. But the amenities were out of their financial reach.

Years later, when Lin struggled to start First Wok restaurant in Farmington, he was touched by the generosity of church members and customers who brought his daughter clothes, school supplies and presents. He vowed that when his restaurant began to make a profit, he would find a way to repay their kindness.

On Saturday, to show his appreciation to customers and the community, Lin will donate the first \$1,000 of the day's profit to two local churches that will provide school supplies to area youth.

"I will give \$500 to New Life Fellowship and \$500 to First Baptist Church of Delassus," Lin said. "They will put together school packages and will give them out in August."

The donation is part of Customer Appreciation Day. Also that day, the regular buffet will be \$1 off and Lin will offer a 10 percent discount on menu items.

The event is one of two days of appreciation each year hosted by Lin, whose Chinese name sounds like Fa Meeng Lin.

“When I started here three years ago, business was not good. I worked for food, not pay,” he said. “But we have been doing better and better. We want to thank the community for their support.”

Lin joined most of his family in this country in 1995 and worked for other restaurants in several states. Before coming to Farmington, he and his family opened restaurants in Illinois and Iowa.

Three years ago, Lin read a Chinese newspaper and saw an advertisement for the sale of the Panda Pavilion in Downtown Farmington. The Pavilion had suffered fire damage, and after its repair, the owner decided to sell. Lin was ready to try his own store.

Lin moved here with his young daughter, Megan, and opened First Wok. When area church members realized his struggle, they brought Megan gifts of toys, clothing, books and other supplies.

“We were so surprised, and she was so happy,” Lin recalled. “People are so nice over here.”

Lin hopes his school supplies donation will put smiles on the faces of other children whose parents cannot afford to buy supplies, or are too busy working to have time to shop for all the items needed for school.

New Life Fellowship plans to make their packages available Aug. 1-3, and First Baptist Church of Delassus plans to distribute theirs on Aug. 12, Lin said. Some of the school supply packages will be available at the restaurant at 19 E. Columbia Street on Aug. 13, he added.

“This is thanks to those who helped us when we first moved here, and to the customers who have supported us,” Lin said. “And it is because I still remember how when I was little, I always wanted nice clothes and school supplies.”