

Santa Clarita Program Offers Teacher Discounts

MARKETING: National movie theater, restaurant chains access educators.

It's routine for businesses to offer discounts to police officers, firefighters and soldiers, but school teachers rarely receive the same treatment.

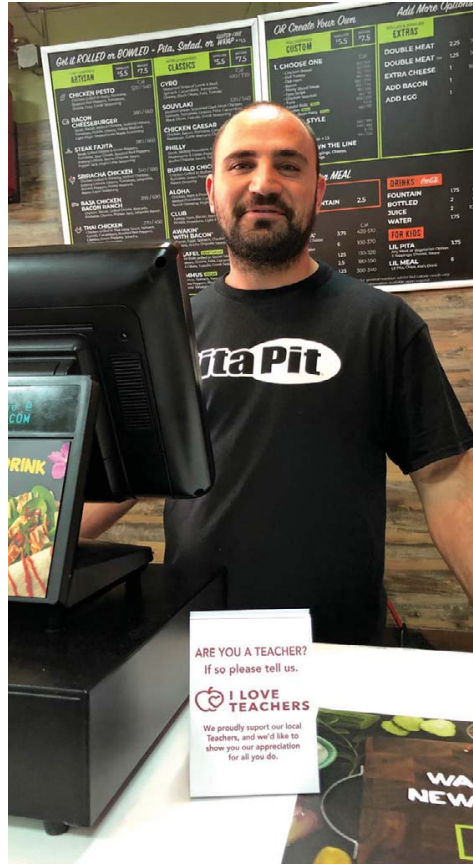
Santa Clarita's **Tyler Anderson**, founder of **I Love Teachers**, wants to change that.

I Love Teachers partners with businesses to offer exclusive savings to educators.

School staffers sign up with the program for a membership fee of \$6 a month and receive access to dozens of discounts. From the subscription fee, \$2 goes to a teacher assistance program to help teachers in need, \$2 goes to a scholarship fund for graduating high school students interested in an education career and \$2 covers the operation of I Love Teachers.

"A lot of businesses do have some type of gated offer, like a senior citizens discount or military discount. But nobody has really had a gated offer for teachers," said Anderson, owner of **No Bugs Organic Pest Control** in Santa Clarita.

Anderson said the concept was conceived last summer when, after hearing about hardships endured by underpaid and overworked teachers, he began advertising free pest control services for school district staff who were out of work until school resumed in the fall. Word



Welcome: I Love Teachers at Pita Pit.

of mouth spread, and support for Anderson's business grew as a result.

"It hit an emotional hot button," he said. "It's not just teachers, it's the whole community coming in to support it too."

Soon after, a Pita Pit franchise in Santa Clarita signed up to provide free sandwiches. Then a friend's tire store offered teachers free

oil changes and tire rotations.

"When you see teachers smile in appreciation, what that does for business owners and employees is priceless," Anderson said.

In February, I Love Teachers launched nationwide. It operates in every ZIP code in the U.S. Anderson says there are 1.4 million discounts available through the program.

Among them are \$9 movie tickets at **Regal Entertainment Group** theaters; 50 percent off appetizers at **Saddle Ranch** restaurants; and 15 percent off all services from **Firestone Complete Auto Care**.

"Businesses are going out of their way to offer really great things," Anderson said.

The I Love Teachers website also includes a new "Teacher's Lounge" section where the public can post ads for tutors, advisors or odd jobs during the summer.

The program's next step is **OurGrade.com**, a sister website where teachers can grade the customer service they receive at a business using a "report card" tailored for specific business types. Anderson hopes to launch it by June and sees it as a better-vetted, more quantifiable competitor to **Yelp**.

Aldi Expands

German discount grocer **Aldi** opened a new supermarket on Roscoe Boulevard in Panorama City this month as part of an expansion campaign throughout Southern California.

Since opening April 11, the market has drawn customers with its vegan and gluten-free products and organic produce. A novelty hit has been the shopping cart system, which requires patrons insert a quarter into a cart's handle to unlock it. The quarter is returned when the cart is put back in the collection area.

The Panorama store is the first of 15 Aldi openings planned for 2019 in Southern California. It is Aldi's 64th supermarket in California, a

number that will swell to 78 by 2020. With this growth, Aldi plans to hire 450 new employees in the region.

Aldi's expansion in Southern California is a microcosm of its expansion nationwide — the company plans to spend \$3.4 billion to open more than 700 U.S. stores and hire 25,000 employees in markets, warehouses and offices by 2022.

Aldi has existing supermarkets in Santa Clarita, Lancaster and Simi Valley. Locations of the futures stores are undisclosed.

Pizza Cookery Relocates

The **Original Pizza Cookery** in Woodland Hills is closing its doors at the end of May after a 45-year run. Founded in 1975, it is one of the longest-standing eateries in the West Valley, but the restaurant's landlord declined to renew the lease, management explained in a Facebook post.

Pizzeria patrons need not fret — the business is reopening in Thousand Oaks at 75 W. Thousand Oaks Blvd., next to the Best Western Plus Inn. It will occupy the property left vacant after the closure of **Camboni Restaurant** last October.

Pizza Cookery is targeting June 1 as an opening date.

Thousand Oaks also offered more affordable rent rates than Woodland Hills.

The restaurant plans to design the new location to look like the original, complete with concrete floors and wood booths and tables, **Ventura County Star** reported.

The Thousand Oaks location will feature a full bar with happy-hour specials, music and an expanded menu, including breakfast and vegan and gluten-free options.

Staff Reporter Andrew Foerch can be reached at afoerch@sfbvj.com or at (818) 316-3130.

Standup a Profitable Center at Comedy Dynamics

DISTRIBUTION: Firm handled all Grammy-nominated laugh tracks last year.

Comedy Dynamics is on a roll when it comes to, well, comedy.

The Burbank entertainment company, which Chief Executive **Brian Volk-Weiss** calls the biggest independent comedy production firm around, is doing a reboot of sitcom "Mad About You," and is now producing the first comedy specials for **Amazon.com Inc.** It was the distributor of all five comedy albums

nominated this year for a Grammy.

"We produce and distribute more standup comedy than anybody by a wide margin," Volk-Weiss said.

Comedy Dynamics is owned by **Nacelle Co.**, also in Burbank, a producer and distributor of feature and documentary films and scripted and unscripted television series. Volk-Weiss

serves as chief executive of the parent company. The comedy division makes money through producer fees it receives for creating and selling its content to television and streaming sites. It also brings in revenue from sales of comedy CDs and albums.

"Sometimes we make a special and own the special and we constantly distribute it all over the world and we make money every day from it that we share with the artists," Volk-Weiss said.

Some of the comedians the company has

worked with include **Jim Gaffigan**, **David Cross**, **Whitney Cummings** and **Tiffany Haddish**.

One of the challenges that Volk-Weiss faced when starting Comedy Dynamics back in 2008 — when it was part of New Wave Entertainment before being spun off two years ago — was that it had no brand recognition and it was tough to get established comedians to trust it with their material.

"It took about five or six years of hard work and risky work to build up that reputation," Volk-Weiss said.

M3 Creative Promotions

Content studio **M3 Creative** announced this month promotions of two of its employees to the position of vice president.

Allison Dana has become vice president of production, while **Brittany Parbs** was promoted to vice president of post-production.

In her role, Dana will oversee the Burbank company's live-action production, including budgeting, assembling crews and managing on-set operations. She had previously been a production supervisor working with such clients as **Viacom Inc.** and **Walt Disney Co.**

In her new role, Parbs will coordinate all aspects of post-production for M3's in-house facility and client campaigns. She previously had been a post-production supervisor for about five years working with such clients as **Warner Bros. Entertainment** and **Disney Channel**.

M3 Creative Partner **Andy Meyers** called Parbs and Dana two of the best at what they do.

"As our industry and specifically M3 continue to evolve from not just marketing content like movies and television shows but to creating that scripted and un-scripted content as well, it's fitting that these two female leaders will be instrumental in maintaining our best-



Humorist: Brian Volk-Weiss.

in-class quality as our team takes it to the next level," Meyers said in a statement.

Pixelogic's Japanese Investor

A strategic investment has made **Imagica Group Inc.** a minority owner of post-production company **Pixelogic**.

Through the partnership with Imagica, in Tokyo, Pixelogic, based in Burbank, will be able to expand its offerings to its customers — movie studios, broadcasters and digital retailers — through synergies with Imagica subsidiary, **SDI Media Group**.

Pixelogic Co-President **John Suh** said the company looked forward to collaborating with Imagica in Japan and throughout Asia.

"We also look forward to scaling our end-to-end services through deep engagement and

integration with **SDI Media** and their substantial dubbing and subtitling capability, which includes the largest owned and operated dubbing studio network and localization capacity in the world," Suh said in a statement.

Cinedigm Executive Shakeup

Cinedigm Corp. announced this month changes to the leadership of its content entertainment group.

Group Executive Vice President **Yolanda Macias** and Senior Vice President **Dan Coyle** now head up the group, having replaced former President **Bill Sondheim**, who left the Sherman Oaks content distribution company to pursue entrepreneurial opportunities.

The changes reflect Cinedigm's focus on digital streaming following its announcement to acquire **Future Today Inc.**, a video platform.

Chief Executive **Chris McGurk** said that with the content distribution business changing at lightning speed, it is important that Cinedigm maintain its leadership position.

"We remain deeply committed to our robust independent premium content distribution business and I am certain our efforts in that arena will continue their success under the leadership of Yolanda and Dan," McGurk said in a statement.

Macias oversees acquiring global content rights and digital distribution across all worldwide platforms. Coyle is responsible for strategic planning and sales of physical media for the company's huge catalog of premium independent film and television titles. Both joined Cinedigm after the company's acquisition of **Gaiam Vivendi Entertainment Inc.** in Universal City.

Staff Reporter Mark R. Madler can be reached at (818) 316-3126 or mmadler@sfbvj.com.



ENTERTAINMENT

Mark R. Madler