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Dunkin' Donuts franchisee makes it his business to give to Maine causes **Ed Wolak of Scarborough began at Dunkin' Donuts more than 40 years ago and now owns 70 stores.**

By STEPHANIE HARDIMAN Staff Writer

When Ed Wolak was 16 in 1967, he was working his first job washing floors in a Manchester, N.H., Dunkin' Donuts. He didn't plan on sticking with it long term, particularly when he hit college and developed an allergy to flour, suffering from what he calls "baker's asthma."

Fast-forward more than 40 years, and Wolak, who lives in Scarborough, clearly decided to stick with it. Today he has 70 stores -- including 11 in Maine -- and plans to open at least 30 more in the next five years.

While his business is rapidly expanding, Wolak is also a major fixture in the nonprofit sector, donating money back to the Maine communities he serves coffee to each morning.

"I think it's somewhat of a moral obligation to give back, especially to the folks that support you every year," Wolak said, adding that he has developed long-standing relationships with some of the charities.

"Without Ed, the place would've been closed," said Tom Doherty, executive director of Scarborough's Camp Ketcha, where Wolak serves on the board of directors and donates tens of thousands of dollars each year to support its programs.

"He stuck with it when it wasn't really pretty to stick with it," Doherty said. Wolak has seen the camp through a devastating fire, staff changeovers and financial difficulties, providing business insight and leadership over the past 20 years.

"He's one of the backbones of this organization," Doherty said.

Being a good steward and actively involved in the community is something that's important to Wolak.

"A lot of people don't realize we're locally owned," Wolak said of the Dunkin' brand.

All of the proceeds from his Main Street, Yarmouth, store on July 15, up to \$5,000, were donated to the Firefighter's Muster event at the Yarmouth Clam Festival.

The festival had one of its best years on record, said spokesman Sheldon Perkins, partly due to a handful of generous, reliable contributors like Wolak.



Ed Wolak, who owns 70 Dunkin' Donuts franchises in New England and New York, as well as a donut factory, stands at the shop on Gray Road in Falmouth.

Gregory Rec/Staff Photographer

He's incredibly modest and low-key, Doherty said, and doesn't often talk about his contributions.

Now the YMCA of Cumberland County is seeing the effects of Wolak's efforts, as all proceeds from V.I.P. mugs sold will go to the organization. Purchasing the \$5 mug means free coffee fill-ups every Sunday for the rest of the year.

"Ed is very in touch with the groups he supports," said Dana Reid, a field marketing manager at Dunkin' who works in the Maine area. "He's a great example of a franchisee."

As Wolak's business expands, it creates more opportunity for him to give back.

Last week he opened a store in Verona, N.Y., and plans to have another open its doors in the next week or two at Le Moyne College in Syracuse.

This will bring his holdings to 11 Dunkin' Donuts in Maine, three in New Hampshire and 56 in upstate New York, as well as a donut factory. A large territory in New York including Ithaca and Syracuse is also exclusively set aside for Wolak's development. The Maine market, he said, is already built out.

When he started with the company there were only about 250 stores. Now there's more than 9,000. He was one of the first testers of Munchkins and was in the coffeeshop business long before there was a Starbucks on every corner.

"When the economy went down, that put Starbucks at the disadvantage. People started to resent paying more than they need to," Wolak said. "Many of those customers traded down to Dunkin' Donuts."

And business has been good, he said.

"People don't realize in the quick service business how much opportunity there really is if they apply themselves," Wolak said.

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