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Business a family affair at PSL's Creative Catering

BYLINE: **Bill Church** BJ contributor

So much for retirement.

Three years ago, Steve and Nancy Huszar moved to the Treasure Coast, leaving behind Steve's 30-year career as a Toms River, N.J., police officer and Nancy's popular downtown breakfast and lunch diner for a life of Florida leisure.

Today, they are the proud owners of West End Grill on St. Lucie West Boulevard and, since Jan. 1, Creative Catering, which is booking events into 2008.

Last year, managers at the Spring Hill Suites off Peacock Boulevard asked Nancy, 54, and Steve, 57, to take over the hotel's catering operation in a building separated from the main lobby by a short walkway.

"We were getting so many requests to rent out West End Grill, but we couldn't do that," Nancy said.

For two months late last fall, they renovated the hotel space with fresh paint and new drapes, furniture, lighting and audio-visual equipment, all under the direction of daughter, Karyn, 30, an interior designer.

The renovated area seats up to 175 for business meetings and 110 for weddings in one 1,600-square-foot room or up to four rooms of equal size separated by dividers. An outside patio near the pool adds another 500 square feet.

The catering facility is booked almost every day, sometimes with several events a day. They had 40 bookings in January after opening.

"The area obviously needed a place like this," Nancy said. "Springhill Suites has been great to us."

The business is an all-family affair. In addition to her design duties, Karyn handles event planning and booking. Son Andrew, 24, manages the West End Grill. Oldest daughter Kristy, 32, does the marketing and keeps the books from her home in New Jersey, where she is a marketing vice president of a pharmaceutical firm.

"I wouldn't have done this without full family support," Nancy said. "We did this for the kids to get them into business

and we'll be doing this for at least 10 years. We anticipate this is going to be real successful."

"It's a good feeling getting a new business up and running," Steve added.

For Karyn, satisfaction comes from return bookings, especially from business groups that are scheduling regular meetings.

"The greatest feeling is getting positive feedback," she said.

Karyn was the first to move to Florida in 1998 when she enrolled at the Art Institute in West Palm Beach. She later graduated from Florida Atlantic University. Andrew came next in 2001 to also attend and graduate from FAU. Their parents followed.

Retirement and relaxation didn't take for the elder Huszars, however, and they opened the West End Grill on Feb. 7, 2005. The upscale restaurant has grown in popularity, with gross sales rising 36 percent in 2006 from 2005 levels.

"We never expected it to do so well," Nancy said.

The Grill has 90 total seats, half outside with heaters for cold weather. Much to the delight of baseball fanatic Andrew, the Grill has become a favorite of New York Mets players during spring training.

Nancy and Steve credit loyal employees with the success of both the West End Grill and the quick takeoff of the catering business. They still employ 90 percent of the staffers who started with them, which is unusual for restaurants. Most of their 35 employees are also working at the catering operation in their off hours, and the Huszars are beginning to hire outside people.

The family members pride themselves on being more than managers.

On any given night, Nancy or Andrew works on the kitchen line.

"There is nothing in the restaurant we won't do," Nancy said. "One of us is always at the Grill."

"We all mop floors and clean tables," her husband added, laughing.

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