

## New entertainment spot celebrates grand opening

Posted: Wednesday, March 23, 2016 8:50 pm | Updated: 8:53 pm, Wed Mar 23, 2016.

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Posted on Mar 23, 2016  
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SOUTHINGTON — Residents rolled bowling balls, shot pool and dined at Crystal Bees Tuesday as Chamber officials celebrated their grand opening.

The attraction at 240 Spring St., which held a soft opening two weeks ago, was abuzz with activity as Southington Chamber of Commerce officials and local business owners toured the site. The spacious venue offers a bar, bowling lanes, bocci, pool tables and games. It will offer fine dining starting next Tuesday.

John and Kerry Antolini, of Southington, ordered a bar food feast of chicken wings and pizza and took turns knocking pins with their sons, Conner, 8, and Cooper, 6.

“This is great all-in-one entertainment,” said John Antolini. “You can’t go wrong.”

“I like bowling, It’s awesome,” said Conner.

“The buffalo wings are pretty good,” said Southington resident Jeremy Mangillo, who dined at the venue with his fiancée Tanya. “The chili lime sauce is pretty sweet, too.”

Meanwhile, Nick Arnista, of Southington, and Mike Mahoney, of Newington, gave the pool tables a go.

“I love the tables,” said Arnista. “They are really straight, not a lick of incline. I’ve been playing for a few years and I feel like this is somewhere that people could come for some serious play.”

“It’s awesome that there’s a bowling alley here too,” said Mahoney. “There’s a lot of space so it doesn’t feel too crowded.”

Elizabeth Hyatt, executive director of the Southington Chamber of Commerce, said Crystal Bees is an “exciting addition” to the town.

“I think they will be very successful,” she said. “They offer something new and different that will draw people in. There’s something here for all ages. I think that businesses will definitely utilize this space for client appreciation events. I’ve already booked the chamber’s Christmas party here.”

Robert Flood, a chamber board member and the branch manager of Liberty Bank of Southington, said Crystal Bees is an “awesome” multi-purpose facility.

“People could hold numerous conventions here either in the morning or night,” he said. “Then, when they’re done, they get to have a little fun. I think its a very strong concept and I like that its a little upscale.”

State Senator Joe Markley, R-Southington, Cheshire, Wolcott, Waterbury, said he had “never seen anything like it.”

“I grew up with Benner Bowl in Milldale, but this is on a whole different level,” he said. “The people who put this together seem to know what they’re doing. It’s very impressive, I think a lot of people will come to give it a try.”

“It’s a great addition to Southington,” said Gil Wade, owner of Southington Security. “There is so much entertainment in town, but a minimal amount of adult entertainment besides what is offered at the YMCA. This will take off, no question.”

Trip Sanders, of Ortho Ouch Care of Southington, said Crystal Bees will be a “great” place to host corporate functions or holiday parties.

Crystal Bees is owned by Donald Millard Jr., who was the CEO of Millard Metal for 32 years before the distribution center closed in 2002. Starting in January of last year, Millard began the process of transforming the building, which was opened by his father in 1972, into Crystal Bees.

The “Bees” in the name comes from the fact that Millard has been a beekeeper since he was 8 years old. The honey produced at his apiary is included in some of the offerings at the venue.

Chuck Chabot, general manager of Crystal Bees, said the venue’s entertainment will include disc jockeys, karaoke and a rotation of bands and solo performers. “Happy hour bowling” will be offered Monday through Friday from 4 to 6 p.m., with \$4 games and \$2 shoe rentals.

Crystal Bees is open for all ages, with adult supervision, until 8 p.m, after which it becomes strictly 21-plus.

Crystal Bees is taking job applications for a sous chef as well as kitchen and support staff. For more information on Crystal Bees, including a schedule of events and positions available, call 860-621-3068 or visit [crystalbees.com](http://crystalbees.com).

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