



## Two brothers, a lawyer and a pizza place

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VALPARAISO | Being Greek, it probably isn't proper to call them the three amigos, but the Costas brothers - Jay and Jon - and friend Tony Bertig are the three investors in a new pizza restaurant in St. Joseph, Mich.

For the Costas brothers, the restaurant is a new venture. Jay owns three car washes in Lake and Porter counties, and Jon is a successful Valparaiso lawyer in addition to dabbling in a little politics on the side. (For those who haven't been paying attention, Jon is the Valparaiso mayor.) Bertig also is a lawyer.

"Tony has a house up there, and he fell into a unique situation where the city owns a building (a former railroad depot) that's been used as a restaurant," Jon Costas said. "I thought it would be a fun thing to do."

Tom Jennings, who previously owned the lease and operates two restaurants in St. Joseph, also will be a partner and help run the new restaurant, which will be called the Silver Beach Pizza Co. It is named for the nearby public beach. They considered calling it Valpo Pizza because they have an agreement with Gelsosomo's Pizzeria to sell their recipe pizzas, but decided the Silver Beach name would be more appropriate.

The city transferred the lease to the Valparaiso trio Feb. 28, and Jon Costas said the new restaurant is expected to open May 1. They are having the place remodeled with the help of a Valparaiso interior designer, who Jon Costas said is "creating a real ambiance."

The depot has housed a series of restaurants that all have closed. Jon Costas said St. Joseph only has two pizza restaurants, about the same number of pizza restaurants as Valparaiso has on each block, which could increase the trio's chances of success.

"We hope to have a little fun with it," he said. "It's something my brother and Tony had a hankering to do, and I thought it sounded like a fun adventure. I like doing things with my brother. It keeps us close, and I'm learning new things. This just kind of came together and made sense."

Jay Costas will work with Jennings to oversee the restaurant operation, and Jon Costas said a niece of his will work at the restaurant full time. The restaurant has an outdoor stage area for live bands to perform, and Costas said he hopes to work his way into performing with the bands on weekends occasionally. The trio has hired the Duke Tomato blues band to perform at the annual Venetian night, and Jon Costas said he hopes he can join them for a song or two.

"We all have to bring our strengths to the table," he said. "This is one of the things I've always wanted to do. We just want a nice family restaurant, and we don't anticipate expanding it beyond St. Joseph."

Then he joked, "We're Greek. We don't want to go to our graves not owning a restaurant."

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