

Number of Beach restaurants going smoke-free growing

By BILL REED, Correspondent

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Just because you can't smoke in a few Virginia Beach restaurants doesn't mean you should leave your butts for old "Cancer" the crab. by Zak Gollop (flickr.com)

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VIRGINIA BEACH - The number of Virginia Beach restaurants going smoke-free is growing, despite the General Assembly's aversion to making it mandatory for all eateries in the state.

So far, banning butts hasn't affected business at many of the cafes, grills and taverns, said Cory Beisel and Mike Atkins on, co-owners of six popular local watering holes.

They are the latest to join the voluntary ban under their umbrella company, At Your Service Restaurants Inc. Included are Chick's Oyster Bar at the mouth of Long Creek near the Lesner Bridge, the Five 01 City Grill, Lucky Oyster Seafood Co. and three Atlas Grill and Bar locations.

Also part of the smoke-free movement are Hot Tuna Grill & Bar, Peabody's Nightclub and Shorebreak Pizza Sports & Billiards. Owner Matt Falvey led efforts to ban smoking in city restaurants as the state legislature was debating the issue earlier this year.

"It seems to me more and more are going smoke-free these days," said Flo McDaniel, executive director of the Virginia Beach

Restaurant Association, which boasts about 100 members.

McDaniel cited the number of resort restaurants that already have banned smoking. These include Abbey Road, Croc's, Beach Pub, Giovanni's Pasta Pizza Palace, Nick's Hospitality Restaurant, Surf Rider restaurants and Watermans.

McDaniel said she had no accurate tally of the number of city restaurants going smoke-free because the Beach boasts hundreds of restaurants, but not all are association members.

Water quality plans

Virginia Beach encompasses 310 square miles, much of it surrounded by or crisscrossed by bodies of water, ranging from the Atlantic Ocean to the Lynnhaven River and meandering Muddy Creek.

An estimated 440,000 people have settled within its boundaries, many of them packed as tightly as possible around Oceanfront, beachfront or riverfront properties.

Years of unchecked development have created waterways polluted by runoff containing animal feces, yard waste, fertilizer and petroleum products, among other things.

Pollution caused the temporary closings of stretches of the beach in the past two years, when health officials discovered high counts of fecal matter in areas where tourists and locals splash in the breakers.

In an effort to stem this trend, and possibly reverse it, the City Council last year appointed a 26-member panel, the Green Ribbon Committee. It's pulling together elements for a long-range plan to improve water quality at the Beach.

Preliminary recommendations include creating greater areas of vegetative buffers between residential areas and commercial parking lots and local waterways, creating long-term landscaping guidelines, preserving more trees in residential developments and reserving more open space in burgeoning developments.

It's going to cost a lot of money, committee co-chairman Peter Schmidt told council members at a May 14 briefing. Just how much remains to be determined, he added.

Farewell, Tony

For years Tony Kolantis was a Beach fixture, a stocky man, with piercing blue eyes and shock of jet-black hair that melded into a distinguished Vandyke on his chin.

He operated the Golden Sands Motel on Atlantic Avenue at 14th Street until he retired in 2003, manning the front desk and overseeing cleaning and maintenance.

His mornings were usually occupied with overseeing the workout routines of a handful of graying, often paunchy, seniors known as "The Over The Hill Gang" at Wareing's Gym. This he also did with gruff efficiency, leavened with salty humor.

Tony took great pride in his role as workout taskmaster, a job he took over after the death of colorful gym founder John Wareing in 2000. He also took great pride in baking bread at his Kempsville home.

Emerging from the Kolantis oven would be loaves of tasty raisin, tomato and white bread, which he happily distributed to family and friends.

Tony died May 12 after an extended bout with cancer. At a visitation May 14, the parking lot at H.D. Oliver Funeral Apartments on Laskin Road was filled. A steady stream of people eased in and out of a side door to offer condolences to his wife, Ann, and immediate family members.

And, if you looked closely enough at the gathering, you could spot a few graying, paunchy seniors milling about obviously members of that elite corps, The Over The Hill Gang.

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