

# The place for a McSummer snack

By LOUISE HOFFMAN

SODUS POINT — For a long time, Robert Weichbrodt looked at this Lake Ontario resort village and saw an untapped market for Big Macs and other fast food fare.

But Weichbrodt, who lives in Sodus Point, knew a full-fledged McDonald's restaurant wouldn't fly here. While jammed with tourists, boaters and fishermen from spring until fall, the village is a virtual ghost town in the winter, when icy winds whip across the lake from Canada and freeze Sodus Bay.

What to do with a business that would be a boon in the summer and a bust in the snowy months? Weichbrodt — owner of Wayne County's four McDonald's restaurants — solved the problem by creating McSnack, the first seasonal McDonald's in Upstate New York.

Set to open Monday on Greig Street in a former hot dog stand, McSnack will serve an abbreviated version of McDonald's regular menu from 5 a.m. until 1 a.m. daily through the end of September. The grand opening will be Saturday, May 20.

Michael Reardon, regional vice-president of McDonald's in Upstate New York, said McSnack is being viewed as an experiment, and if it proves there is a viable market for fast food, it will become a permanent fixture in Sodus Point.

Because of McSnack's limited kitchen space, Weichbrodt won't initially sell salads, biscuit sandwiches, quarter-pounders, McDLT's and some other McDonald's items. He said he expects the restaurant's menu to change as customer demand indicates what people want to eat.

"I've been fiddling with the thought of opening something like McSnack for a long time," said Weichbrodt, who owns the McDonald's restaurants in Lyons, Macedon, Newark and Williamson. "In Sodus Point, there's a market for my type of product; there's not a good place for parents to take kids that isn't a full service, expensive restaurant."

By opening early, Weichbrodt also hopes to attract fishing enthusiasts who are looking to catch a quick bite to eat before hopping on a charter boat or casting their lines from shore into Sodus Bay.

A municipal sign ordinance prohibits him from erecting McDonald's traditional golden arches, but Weichbrodt said an awning over an enclosed deck dining area will bear a McSnack logo. There will also be outside seating and walk-up windows, reminiscent of the pre-Big Mac era, when McDonald's only served take-out hamburgers, cheeseburgers, french fries and soft drinks from its white, red and yellow-tiled restaurants.

McSnack, however, doesn't resemble McDonald's, past or present. Instead of tiles, or the dark brown brick and glass that characterize modern McDonald's, McSnack is housed in a small, L-shaped wood-frame structure, newly aluminum-sided in gray.

"There's no inside seating, no drive-thru, and no inside bathrooms," said Weichbrodt, who has a two-year lease on the building with an option to buy that he predicts he will exercise. He would

not disclose how much he spent to renovate the structure — owned by David Lagana and previously called Hot's Point — but said it was "substantial."

So far, Weichbrodt has hired 18 people to work at McSnack, which will be managed by his son, Warren, currently manager of the Lyons restaurant. By summer, McSnack is expected to have a staff of 40.

Wayne County Planning Director Sharon Lilla, who lives within sight of McSnack, said Weichbrodt's effort has received a lot of support in Sodus.

"I've heard nothing but good things," said Lilla. "It's about time a major corporation took Sodus Point seriously."

Jason Bellush, director of communications for the Albany branch of Arnold, Inc., McDonald's advertising agency, said the corporation traditionally puts a great deal of faith in ideas suggested by the franchisers of its 10,000 U.S. restaurants. Once Weichbrodt convinced corporate officials McSnack would work and he had an available building, they gave him the go-ahead.

Reardon said Weichbrodt first approached him with the idea for serving Sodus Point a few years ago. Back then, they thought the only way to do it was to import McDonald's products from the Williamson restaurant, 10 miles away, compromising the food's freshness. The McSnack concept, thought up by Weichbrodt, solved the problem, Reardon said.

Bellush said a check with McDonald's national headquarters in Oak Brook, Ill., indicated McSnack may be the only seasonal McDonald's operating, but he thinks there may have been others in the past.

"I don't think Bob's is the first," said Bellush. "Seventy-five percent of McDonald's restaurants are owned by franchisers who do their own thing, with the goal of reaching out to customers, and its likely some owners have experimented with the McSnack concept."

But Weichbrodt, who joined McDonald's in 1982, said he doesn't care if his McSnack is the first seasonal McDonald's or not.

"McDonald's is a great company," he said. "I love McDonald's; I work very hard for these people."

## Trump plans new board game

EAST LONGMEADOW, Mass. (AP) — Donald J. Trump, the quintessential wheeler-dealer, faces a new kind of board in his newest venture, "Trump The Game."

The real estate mogul has joined forces with board game manufacturer Milton Bradley Co., which expects the game to be the biggest seller in its 129-year history.

Trump flew to Milton Bradley headquarters Thursday to discuss the game.

Neither the company nor Trump will reveal his royalties, but both said he is donating proceeds to charities for the homeless and for research on AIDS, cerebral palsy and multiple sclerosis.