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Male-only salon to open first area shop in Roseville center

American Male salons cater to men who want more than just a haircut

By Kelly Johnson – Staff writer

A national network of upscale, male-only salons will soon be asking locals if they want a beer, paraffin hand dip and back wax with that haircut.

American Male, operated by A.M. Salons Inc. of Pennsylvania, figures local men are looking for something more than a simple haircut. The company reckons men, especially younger men, want more pampering than they can get at a barbershop, and they want a more masculine environment than can be found at a unisex salon.

The region's first American Male is set to open Jan. 26 in almost 1,200 square feet in the Home Depot-anchored shopping center on Fairway Drive in Roseville.

The salon is the 16th under the American Male banner and will be the last to be operated as a licensee. All future American Male locations will be franchised sites, spokeswoman Stacia Stasnek said. American Male anticipates reaching 200 salons by 2010.

American Male's expansion comes as the number of barbershops declines nationwide and as segments of the male population are becoming more familiar with



and desirous of services such as massage and manicures.

They want to be well-groomed and are willing to pay for it, industry observers say.

“The metro-sexual revolution actually has taken place,” said Mary Atherton, editor-in-chief of Modern Salon magazine.

Most male-only hair salons are value-priced concepts, such as SportsClips, Atherton said.

Texas-based SportsClips entered California last year with a store in Roseville. For \$19, SportsClips offers a haircut, shampoo, head and shoulder massage and a steam towel for the face.

American Male's biggest seller is its \$40 ‘quality grooming experience,’ which includes a paraffin hand dip, scalp massage, mini-facial, shampoo, cut, re-shampoo and a style. With that and other services, Roseville customers will get one free drink – beer, wine tea or water. Other services include hair coloring, highlights, facials, waxing, manicures and pedicures.

Considering that the average haircut in a salon is \$22, American Male \$40 offering is high-end, said Gordon Miller, executive director of National Cosmetology Association.

Bill Gearing of Granite Bay has long wanted to open an all-male hair salon. He and his wife, Mimi, have owned a 17-chair, high-end salon in Los Altos since 1996. One stylist serves primarily men and has found that men – especially executives – want many of the same services as women.

The Gearings teamed up with neighbor Peter Hurley to become American Male licensees. The partners bring the financial expertise, Gearing said, that hair salons often lack. He's chief financial officer for electrical contractor EZ Electric, while Hurley is president of American Mortgage Group. The partners will have a full-time manager run the store. Gearing said he hopes to eventually operate five American Male locations. Northern California, Folsom, downtown Sacramento and Walnut Creek are possibilities.

The corporate office of American Male figures the four-county metro area could support six salons, Stasnek said.

The Roseville salon needs 30 clients a day to break even, Gearing said. He expects to make a profit by the third month. The salon will operate every day but Monday to start and may later expand to seven days a week. Appointments are encouraged.

The core group of customers will be age 25-50 or even 60, Gearing said. He anticipates most of his customers will come from unisex salons. The corporate office of American Male, however, figures nationally its locations are enticing men primarily away from barbershops.

American Male tends to flood a new market with direct mail or gift certificates distributed through local gyms, Stasnek said.

The company's salons usually retain 85 percent of clients.

NOT JUST FOR EXECUTIVES

American Male started as a test run in 1997 by parent company Raylon Corp., a beauty products distributor and consulting company. After opening several corporate locations the company started licensing additional salons. It has typically added two salons a year and now operates in eight states. Last spring, American Male began seeking franchising approval in various states.

Salons are typically 800 to 1,500 square feet in leased strip malls or downtown locations. Franchisees will pay \$28,000 fee, royalties of 5 percent of gross weekly sales and typically invest \$160,000 to \$250,000 to start their business, Stasnek said.

Most male-only salon concepts have one only or two locations. There have long been high-end barbershops offering expanded services in cities such as San Francisco, New York and Washington D.C., Modern Salon's Atherton said.

Now men are deciding they don't have to be executives to partake of such grooming and pampering services. There's a place for a concept such as American Male, she added. "It's definitely a younger man who is interested and accepting."

