

## SYLVIA RECTOR | WORD OF MOUTH

# New Willson's Pub fills niche in Commerce Township

## Bar-and-burger spot steps up

BY SYLVIA RECTOR • FREE PRESS RESTAURANT CRITIC • April 16, 2009

Owner Glen Willson, 51, of Novi set out to create a moderately priced place with a higher-end look and style -- a venue that would serve the neighborhood as a family-friendly lunch and dinner spot as well as a local sports-bar destination. Sand-colored stone and rich, dark wooden wainscoting cover the walls in the dining room, while the bar feels clubby and intimate.

Lining the walls of the bar are framed photos of famous Wilsons, from Wilson Picket to President Woodrow Wilson and from Brian Wilson to Dennis the Menace's "Mr. Wilson." To emphasize the unusual spelling of his own name, Willson has inserted an extra "L" in the nameplates beneath the pictures.

To run the kitchen, he hired chef Rick Ormsby, whose résumé includes 15 years as sous chef of the Lark in West Bloomfield, when Marcus Haight was in charge of the kitchen.



Ormsby's casual, appealing menu includes soups from scratch, burgers made with Certified Angus Beef and house-made pizzas baked in stone-hearth ovens. Some of the most popular dinner items are the chef's specials, including a fish of the day for \$13.

The 165-seat venue is entirely smoke-free -- rare for a sports bar. Located in a shopping strip across the street from Union Lake, the restaurant will feature outdoor dining when a new patio and landscaping are completed this spring.

Willson, a first-time restaurateur, was president of an international auto-parts manufacturing business until he left the company in early 2008. His brother, Bill Willson of Commerce, is a co-owner. (2256 Union Lake Road; 248-363-1849)