

# Popular restaurant to move into location vacated by Goodfriends

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By Joyzelle Davis, Rocky Mountain News (Contact Thursday, April 24, 2008,

Photo by Darin McGregor / The Rocky



Annie's Cafe owners Peggy Anderson, left, and Diane Williams share good news with employees that the restaurant is moving to the Goodfriends location on East Colfax Avenue. Annie's Cafe and Bar will open at the site June 9.

Late last year the news came to venerable Annie's Cafe at East Eighth Avenue and Colorado Boulevard: It would have to close for at least a year to make way for construction of

a swank new hotel.

Customers wondered where they'd find another homey, comfort food-filled restaurant that featured jars of Jif peanut butter alongside the ketchup and mustard.

Owners and co-founders Diane Williams and Peggy Anderson worried what would happen to their 35-employee workplace family, many of whom have worked at the restaurant for decades, during the unpaid hiatus.

But then the remarkable happened: Another longtime Denver restaurateur threw Annie's a lifeline. Lee Goodfriend and David Racine, co-owners of Goodfriends, Racines and Dixons Downtown Grill, offered to let Annie's take over their Goodfriends location on Colfax, a little more than a mile away.

"It's such a huge relief for us," Anderson said. "We were sick to our stomach that we'd be putting our employees out of work."

For Lee Goodfriend, the decision to shutter her 29-year-old namesake restaurant wasn't as joyous. But it was a move she and Racine planned to make anyway when the restaurant's lease came up for renewal in two years so they could focus on their two other restaurants at a time when soaring food and energy prices are crimping profit margins.

"If I think about it too much, it makes me want to start crying," Goodfriend said. "But I love the thought that we're helping two independent women who are really great operators."

Goodfriends, known for its potent margaritas, will serve its last meal on May 17. Annie's plans to do some light remodeling, including stringing up the restaurant's collection of vintage lunch pails, and open as Annie's Cafe and Bar on June 9.

If all goes well, Annie's on Colorado will close at the usual 3 p.m. time Sunday and open the next morning on Colfax without missing a beat, Williams said.

Goodfriends' nearly 60 employees will be offered jobs at the new Annie's or at Racines or Dixons. Annie's will need to ramp up its staff because the new space is nearly twice as large and should attract a late-night crowd.

Annie's also plans to open a to-go, cowgirl-themed outpost called Annie's Express ("Annie's little sister," Williams quipped) in the Magnolia Hotel downtown this June, which will employ another five or six chefs.

Although Goodfriends and Annie's have been iconic Denver neighborhood restaurants for nearly 30 years, the owners knew each other only in passing until now.

Anderson and Williams knew that Racines had gone through the exact same dislocation in 2003 when it was forced to move and popped by the restaurant one morning to ask for advice. Instead, they got a solution.

Annie's staff toasted the news at a champagne-filled staff meeting Thursday afternoon, relieved to know that the Annie's crew would stay intact - and to finally be able to have something to tell their worried customers.

"It's been very touching how the regular customers have expressed so much concern about Annie's," said Berta Godin-Wood, a waitress for some 24 years. "This place is almost like a vortex, the way it draws you in."

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