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## Soup's on as Zoup franchise debuts in Illinois



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**Andy Toomire talks about his new Zoup franchise in Downers Grove. The restaurant sells a variety of soups and sandwiches.**

Chicken pot pie soup and lobster bisque are the two most popular selections served at a new franchise in DuPage County that focuses on soup.

Zoup Fresh Soup Company, based in Southfield, Mich., opened its first Illinois location recently at 2948 Finley Road in Downers Grove.

"Zoup is a quick, casual restaurant focusing on soup for its mainline. We have over 100 soups with 12 rotating daily varieties," said co-owner Andy Toomire. Each day features at least one low-fat, vegetarian, dairy-free and spicy recipe, all served with bread.

Prices range from \$6.95 for a bowl of lobster bisque to \$4.65 for a bowl of split pea. Salads and sandwiches join the soup selections. Toomire said customers can also mix a half sandwich or salad with a cup of soup. "And we encourage sampling," he said. There is even a 32-ounce soup size that customers



**Kim Mikus**  
*Suburban business*

are able to take home for \$9.65.

Toomire, who runs the local operation with Naperville resident Matt Sall, said the newest location is a popular lunch destination because of its location near office buildings.

The owners, who both grew up in Elk Grove Village, met when they worked together at an industrial company that sold fasteners.

Sall, who discovered the company while in Michigan, suggested to Toomire that they look into bringing the concept to Illinois.

Toomire, who says he is a big fan of soup, said he was blown away when he visited a restaurant in Ohio. "I thought it was outstanding." When Toomire, 47, lost his job, he looked into the business

concept. The Streamwood resident runs the day-to-day operations of the 2,542-square-foot restaurant, which employs about 17 full- and part-time employees.

Sall continues to work his full-time job and assists on the weekends at the eatery, which seats 58 people.

The business partners hope to grow the concept in the suburban area.

There are currently about 30 of the restaurants throughout the Midwest and Northeast in eight states. "In good times and bad, soup carries powerful and intangible qualities that provide comfort and promote a genuine sense of well-being for many people," said Eric Ersher, founder and managing partner for the company, which started about 12 years ago.

Zoup in Downers Grove is open from 11 a.m. to 8 p.m. Monday through Saturday and noon to 6 p.m. Sunday.