

# Papa Murphy's pizza shop doubling size in Kalispell

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The owners of Papa Murphy's Take 'N' Bake Pizza in Kalispell are nearing completion of a new facility that will double the amount of store space.

The new take-and-bake pizza store is being constructed directly south of the existing pizza shop at the corner of Center Street and Third Avenue West.

"We're shooting for the first week of October to move in," General Manager Tyler Wilkonski said. "Once we're in the building we'll do phase two, making a nice parking lot."

The existing building will be removed to make room for more parking.

"We finally just outgrew this one," he said.

The new facility is 1,950 square feet, while the current building is 1,000 square feet.

Wilkonski's parents, Mike and Tracy Wilkonski, opened the Papa Murphy's franchise store nearly 20 years ago. Tyler has been involved with the family business for six years.

The Wilkonskis also own the Papa Murphy's Pizza business in Evergreen. Growth at both stores has been steady.

"This year we're almost double [at the Kalispell store] from six to seven years ago," Wilkonski said. "Evergreen is doing better than I thought. It took off pretty fast."

The Kalispell store employs a staff of 20 mostly part-time pizza makers; the Evergreen store employs 13. The labor shortage in the Flathead Valley has made it difficult to keep full staffs, Wilkonski said.

"It's hard to find people, and we're going into the busy season," he said, noting an uptick already as Monday Night Football on TV gets underway.

Papa Murphy's started in 1981 in Vancouver, Washington, as Papa Aldo's Pizza. Aldo's merged with Murphy's Pizza in 1995, creating the take-and-bake pizza chain that today has more than 1,400 stores in the United States and Canada.

Features editor Lynnette Hintze may be reached at 758-4421 or by email at [lhintze@dailylake.com](mailto:lhintze@dailylake.com).



**Tyler Wilkonski**

Tyler Wilkonski, the owner of Papa Murphy's in Kalispell, makes a pizza on Thursday. (Aaric Bryan/Daily Inter Lake)