

Post-Tribune

Pizzeria's vehicles convert to natural gas fuel system

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BY KAREN CAFFARINI, POST-TRIBUNE CORRESPONDENT

CALUMET CITY, Ill. -- Doreen's Gourmet Pizza has added more green to its pies, and that doesn't mean additional peppers.

The 5-year-old pizzeria and frozen pizza company Thursday unveiled its new onsite natural gas fueling station, which will provide compressed natural gas fuel for its own eight delivery trucks.

Doreen's delivers its handmade pizza to more than 600 food service establishments and 150 grocery stores in the Chicago area and Northwest Indiana, including Strack & Van Til, County Market and Meijer. It has 24 employees. Doreen's Pizzerias are in Dyer and the Hegewisch area of Chicago under a different owner.

Firm president Bob Wisz said Doreen's also has purchased Renewable Energy Certificates to match 100 percent of the electricity that will be used. The RECs will finance wind power, further reducing reliance on fossil fuels.

Wisz said he started the process of converting to compressed natural gas fuel two years ago, when the price of gasoline was hovering at \$4 a gallon, with diesel fuel at \$5 a gallon. He said his total fuel costs were about \$5,000 a month, endangering the business.

Wisz said CNG fuel is costing him about 96 cents a gallon in comparison. This savings will help him recoup his initial \$40,000 cost for the onsite fuel station in about 1 to 1 1/2 years.

While cost was the initial factor in switching to CNG, the significance of relying less on oil, especially oil drilled from the seas, was not lost on the business owner or others attending Thursday's ceremony at Doreen's, 130 State. St.

Alluding to President Obama's speech in which he said problems in the Gulf won't end until we break dependence on foreign oil, Wisz said CNG is made in America and 85 percent comes from land-based production.

Doreen's may be able to receive a matching grant from the U.S. Department of Energy, earmarked for companies that use alternative fuel sources, including alternative fuel stations such as CNG, said a spokesman from city of Chicago Department of Environment, which is disbursing \$15 million of the federal grants. The spokesman said the grant could pay for half the cost of the fuel station.