

Café opens in historic Riddle's Mill

By **DARON HARRIS**
Special to The Daily Home

Diners in the Talladega area have another choice to add to their list of local restaurants. Danny and Donna Murphy have opened Riddle Mill Café and Grill in the historic Riddle's Mill, nestled alongside Talladega Creek off Alabama 77 in Waldo.

The Murphys have a combined 23 years of experience in the culinary and hospitality sectors. Both Danny, who has roots in the Talladega Springs-Fayetteville area, and Donna, who originally hails from the Tallapoosa, Ga., area, credit someone with a nickname almost as colorful as the history of the old mill itself as the main factor in bringing them the idea of re-opening a restaurant here. Talladega resident Tony "Birdog" Bishop, a close friend of the couple, had been concerned about the old mill falling into disrepair. He encouraged the Murphys to stop by and visit the old mill during one of their trips between Fayetteville and Tallapoosa. Turk Phillips, owner of the property, is equally pleased to see the Murphys coming here to offer quality food at reasonable prices in a family-friendly space.

The setting offers pleasant and relaxing views of Talladega Creek flowing just underneath the main dining area. One of Alabama's oldest covered bridges, the historic Waldo bridge, constructed in the 1850s, is immediately adjacent to the parking area of the restaurant. A long, wide porch, deck and creek promenade area offer visitors an opportunity for a peaceful stroll along the water, either before or after a meal.

"It's a place that's not really far out of town, but still one that makes you feel like you have gone somewhere to get away for a relaxing dinner," said Donna Murphy. "You don't have to go far from home to feel like you've gotten away from it all." She added, "We've been so happy with the response from people showing up just from word of mouth, and everyone who has come through these doors has said how they are happy to see this old place coming back to life. When they try the food, they are even happier!"

On July 24, the restaurant opened with a soft launch before the grand opening ribbon cutting ceremony on the 31st hosted by the Greater Talladega and Lincoln Area Chamber of Commerce. Donna Murphy specifically wanted



Riddle Mill Café and Grill is in a rustic spot alongside Alabama 77 south of Talladega.



Georgia native Donna Murphy dishes up fresh vegetables at her restaurant in Waldo.



Fayetteville native Danny Murphy works in the kitchen at Riddle Mill Café and Grill in Waldo.



The spacious dining room is family- and kid-friendly.

order to get everything running smoothly for the days ahead. Joining Executive Director Jason Daves of the chamber of commerce at the ribbon cutting were Mayor Larry Barton of Talladega and Mayor Susan Crim of Waldo. Both mayors were quick to express their well wishes for the restaurant, with renewed optimism that the re-opening of business here will be a plus for the area, not only in serving local residents but also as an attractive place to visit for tourists and diners coming in from other areas.

The location's history has always been one of community gathering, and from the early settler days of the area, the Riddle family's mill and forge operations along Talladega Creek were crucial in establishing the local economy beginning in the 1840s. The mill building has served historically as a gathering point, hosting such events as church services, civic events and weddings. For many years, the site has been the home of Waldo's September Sorghum Soppin' Festival. Both Donna and Danny Murphy are keen to discuss if this festival can come back to its traditional location, now that the old mill location is back to life.

The dining rooms are spacious with a rustic wooden décor you would expect of a millhouse. The couple wanted the environment to be warm, welcoming, and family- and kid-friendly, and they have included some arcade and prize games around the property to make things fun for children.

Of particular note regarding the menu, diners can order breakfast at any time. You can expect homemade down-home cooking at all times, and the \$10 buffet, which includes salad bar and dessert options including hot banana pudding and various fruit cobblers, is sure to be popular. Diners can also order entrees including fried catfish and freshly cut ribeye steaks from the menu. Fried chicken and sumptuous hamburger steak with gravy are a couple of stand-out items to be had in the buffet, along with many fresh vegetable options and even homemade soups.

On Saturdays and Sundays, the restaurant will be opening extra early. Hours of operation are Thursday and Friday, 5 p.m. to 9 p.m., and Saturday and Sunday from 6 a.m. to 9 p.m.

Photos by
Brian Schoenhals

the restaurant kitchen and wait staff to have a good week of cooking and service under their belts in



Breakfast is available anytime at Riddle Mill Café and Grill.



Donna and Danny Murphy stand outside Riddle Mill Café and Grill in Waldo.

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