

# Wetzel's Pretzels puts a twist on employee incentives

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STAFF WRITER

PASADENA — Motivation in the workplace comes in many forms.

Some companies offer holiday bonuses as incentives. Others give away gift certificates or Hawaiian vacations.

But Wetzel's Pretzels LLC, the Pasadena-based bakery chain renowned for its hand-rolled soft pretzels, has come up with something different.

The company is promoting customer service with "Catch a Star," an employee incentive program that

awards finalists a trip to Hollywood and a screen test for a major motion picture.

Film producer John Davis — a Wetzel's Pretzel investor — will choose the brightest star for a walk-on role in one of his fall 2006 productions.

"In the fast-food industry people don't get much in the way of incentives, and we wanted to do something that was almost an 'American Idol' type idea," company co-founder and CEO Bill Phelps explained. "John Davis is one of our investors, so we called him up and he loved the idea. It's easy for him to get someone into a

movie."

Co-founder Rick Wetzel said the contest underscores the company's drive to upgrade the service it delivers to its customers.

And superior service, he said, equates to increased sales and "more satisfied repeat guests."

"Catch a Star" encourages store employees to provide exceptional customer service. The program will have three phases, starting with an initial selection of nominees, each to be evaluated by secret shoppers.

The 15 semi-finalists will be videotaped (as a pre-screen test), receive a

\$50 gift card and be featured in the company newsletter.

Wetzel's franchise advisory council will select the final three finalists to be flown to Los Angeles for a screen test with Davis, who has worked on such movies as "Dr. Doolittle," "The Firm," "Garfield: The Movie," "I, Robot" and "Courage Under Fire."

The finalists also will receive an expenses-paid Hollywood "movie-star" visit, which includes a makeover, spa treatments and limo transport to FOX Studios for a screen test.

The winner will return to California

this fall to participate in Davis' film.

Wetzel's Pretzels LLC is a privately held company with more than 250 company-owned and franchised locations throughout the United States; Mexico, Canada, South Korea, Australia, Saudi Arabia, Philippines and Puerto Rico.

Last year, Wetzel's companywide sales hit \$567 million, a 25 percent increase from the previous year. The company's same-store sales were up about 12 percent.

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## TUESDAY'S MARKETS

DOW JONES	▲	+51.87	10,799.23	DOLLAR IN YEN	▲	+0.16	117.34
NYSE	▲	+5.49	7,898.36	EURO	▼	-0.0015	\$1.2507
NASDAQ	▲	+5.50	2,043.22	GOLD	▼	-22.30	\$628.30
S&P 500	▲	+2.37	1,236.86	SILVER	▼	-0.555	\$10.455
NIKKEI	▼	-408.00	14,437.24	OIL	▼	-1.76	\$73.54

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