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Bob Walter: Nugget's golden opportunity in El Dorado

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Polishing a Nugget: Opening day is only two months away for food lovers in El Dorado Hills who have been waiting for Nugget Market to set up shop in the EDH Town Center.

"We're getting excited, and the neighborhood has been getting excited," said **Eric Stille**, president of the Woodland-based supermarket chain.

The opening date is Jan. 30, and Eric said about a third of the staff of 150 already has been hired.

Finding good help has not been much of a problem for Nugget, which ranks 13th on Fortune Magazine's national list of the best 100 companies for which to work.

Eric said more than 1,000 people have applied for jobs in EDH so far, and he expects to have 2,000 applications before they finish hiring.

"That makes it pretty easy to put together a great team," he said.

Meanwhile, down in Elk Grove, we are jealous. Our identical Nugget won't open until May 28. ...

Strikes and Stein Mart: The owners of Strikes Family Entertainment Center of Rocklin are scouting the Empire Ranch area of Folsom for one of their bowling/arcade/laser tag/dining complexes.

But they apparently struck out, pardon the expression, on their favorite site – the old Ralphs supermarket building at Blue Ravine and East Natoma – which may become a Stein Mart discount department store.

But let's stay with Strikes for now. **Keith Burcham**, co-owner of the huge (68,000 square feet) Rocklin entertainment emporium, said his firm is eager to open a center in Folsom. There has been plenty of interest from locals and the city, he said.

Things are still up in the air, he said, but his group's first choice for a location is around Blue Ravine, Natoma and Green Valley Road.

Keith, who also is planning to put Strikes in Elk Grove, said taking most of the old Ralphs building would have been a great fit. But the landlord preferred Stein Mart, Keith said, and reportedly is close to closing a deal with the Florida-based retailer. ...

No comment: Of course, neither Stein Mart nor the broker for the Folsom shopping center would talk about the purportedly pending deal. That's the way commercial real estate works.

Terranomics broker **Shaun Morrow** said he was close to a deal for two tenants to share the old Ralphs but he could not name any names until the lease was signed.

(The situation is similar for the shuttered Ralphs at Greenback and Madison, he said. More on that another day.)

And **Kathy Lussier** a spokeswoman for Stein Mark in Jacksonville, said her company "always is looking for new locations" but would not talk about sites until a lease is signed.

Stein Mart has about 270 stores in 30 states, including stores in Rocklin, Fresno and 27 in Southern California. They sell men's and women's clothing, shoes, home decor, gifts and jewelry and have been described as hybrids between discount stores and finer department stores

While she would not talk about Folsom, Kathy said her company usually can convert an existing

building – such as an old supermarket – into a Stein Mart in about 4 1/2 weeks. Sometimes less. Stay tuned. ...

'Tis the season: The Christmas, er, holiday, season takes full flight on Saturday at the El Dorado Hills Town Center with the annual tree lighting and open house from 6-8:30 p.m.

Debbie Manning, president of the EDH Chamber of Commerce, said the event drew some 2,000 people last year, the first time the tree lighting was held at the Town Center.

Sponsored by the chamber, Community Services District and the Town Center, the event features refreshments, live music and surprises.

Cheers. ...

Tree lighting, part II: Farther up the hill – at 681 Main St. in Placerville – Snowline Hospice invites the community to the 21st annual Light a Life ceremony on Sunday at 6 p.m.

Snowline's **Susannah Maddox** said the ceremony – free and open to the public – provides a way to celebrate the holiday season, remember loved ones who have been lost and honor those who still are with us.

For a \$15 donation, loved ones can be memorialized or honored on name boards and memorial books that will be displayed near the tree in the Wilkinson Hupcey building.

Susannah said the tree will remain lit and the name boards displayed through the end of December. For more information, call  (530) 621-7820 .

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