

Family tradition

New Betty's Hungry House takes shape in Seneca

By **CARLOS GALARZA**
carlos@dailyjm.com

SENECA — Betty's Hungry House, a downtown landmark arguably serving the best biscuits in the Upstate for breakfast and hearty, plentiful country-style dishes for lunch, is on track to move to a new building sometime this spring.

On Monday, members of the family-owned restaurant gathered with city officials in front of the new facility quickly taking shape behind the old building on Fourth and Fairplay streets in Seneca's historic district for an official groundbreaking ceremony.

Seneca Mayor Dan Alexander and Councilman Joel Ward donned hard hats and took up shovels in joining new owner Michelle Smith, who takes over the business from her father, Harold Young. Young, in turn, took it over from the original owner, his sister, Betty Outz.

Smith was just a little girl when her Outz opened the doors to the Hungry House in 1981. Except for a dining area added in the back, the old restaurant has undergone few cosmetic changes in the past 28 years.

Now that her father's dream of building a new restaurant at the same location is close to becoming a reality, Smith said she looks forward to Betty's Hungry House being kept in the family for future generations.

Smith said her Aunt Betty started a tradition of making over-sized biscuits for breakfast to build a reputation for her business in Seneca. While construction of the new facility continues, cars line the streets outside of the old Betty's Hungry House, where the place stays busy for breakfast and lunch every day.

"She (Betty) believed in good country cooking and that the customer never left hungry," Smith said. "We want to keep the tradition she started."

Young said his sister also owned two other similar Hungry House restaurants in



Jessica Nelms/Staff

Taking part in a groundbreaking ceremony for the new Betty's Hungry House building, left background, are: project manager Mike Jones of Joel Davis Construction and Joel Davis; front from left, Hungry House employee Connie Anderson; Hungry House co-owner Harold Young and his wife, Barbara; 7-year-old Madison Smith; Michelle Smith with her 1-year-old son, Shilo; Seneca Councilman Joel Ward; and Mayor Dan Alexander.

Georgia and on S.C. Highway 28 at Bountyland Quick Stop. Young said he bought the Bountyland restaurant and later also bought the Seneca Hungry House from his sister in 1997 when she retired.

Young loves to look out from the back of the old Hungry House in Seneca and see the progress on the 3,800-square-foot new facility being built by Joel Davis Construction.

"We owe that to the good Lord and our loyal customers," Young said.

The history of the Hungry House building preceded her aunt taking it over, Smith said. She said customers who have lived in Seneca for a long time have told her the building once was used as an ice cream store, a service station and garage.

Although Young and his wife, Barbara, who operate the restaurant along with Smith, had talked about building a new restaurant since 2006, there were many hurdles to those plans because of the building's location in the historic district.

Smith credits Alexander and Ward with helping to have

the area of Betty's Hungry House rezoned from residential to residential-commercial. She said that new designation opened the door for building plans to proceed.

"If the zoning change had not been made, the new construction would not have been possible," Smith said.

Smith said customers have asked that the new Betty's Hungry House expand its operation past its current 6 a.m.-2 p.m. hours.

"They'd like us to open at night to serve meats and vegetables for dinner," Smith said. "We hope to continue giving better service to our customers."

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