

DOWNERS GROVE

New sports store owners taking community approach

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Although it's part of a 400-store chain, the Downers Grove Play it Again Sports store has a fresh community-driven outlook and some new owners.

Downers Grove residents Mike Barofsky and his girlfriend Jill McCook are in their first year of owning the Play it Again Sports store at 1628 Ogden Ave.

Both owners are making it a priority to get involved in Downers Grove and the surrounding communities.

"What a great opportunity to get involved in a successful business with so much more potential and community involvement," Barofsky said. "We're taking a much more community approach to it."

Play it Again Sports stores have been around for 25 years and offer both new and used sports gear. People can drop off their used sports equipment for evaluation and then either get cash, trade it in or get store credit.

The store is involved with helping the local high schools find the gear coaches need as well as sponsoring a little league team in Clarendon Hills.

"I live in Downers Grove, and my kids go to school here, play sports and are involved in the park district," McCook said. "What Mike and I have done and made a priority is to branch out into the community. We feel like we live here and our kids are in the school system, and we really wanted to be more a part of the community."

Barofsky and McCook said the response from Downers Grove residents regarding the new management has been positive, and they see families coming in on a regular basis to trade in clothes or shoes after kids grow out of them.

"There is this loyal following of people within the community that really subscribe or believe in the concept of trading (sports gear)," Barofsky said.

Barofsky said the franchise territories are large compared to other chains, and the Play it Again Sports store in Hodgkins closed in January. The next closest store is in Villa Park.

"It's unbelievable how far people drive to come to the store," Barofsky said. "They use it as a place to find their diamond in the rough."

Barofsky said he and McCook plan to participate in the Downers Grove Heritage Festival, where they will set up a tent and give away prizes.



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Staff photo by Ron Koopmann

Jill McCook and Mike Barofsky, both of Downers Grove, are in their first year of owning the Play it Again Sports store in Downers Grove. The couple said they are making it a priority to work with community sports organizations.