

J. Gilligan's owner opens patio events center

By Kathryn Cargo The Shorthorn senior staff | Posted: Wednesday, April 30, 2014 12:00 am

J. Gilligan's Bar and Grill owner Randy Ford's phone has buzzed constantly since he opened the newly established South Street Patio in downtown Arlington.

"Right now, my phone is ringing off the wall about graduation for UTA," Ford said.

South Street Patio, located just across the street from J. Gilligan's Bar and Grill, took over the lease of the 8,000-square-foot venue previously occupied by Capital Bar. Capital Bar officially closed Feb. 17 after Dodson Development locked out the owners for being substantially behind in rent and tax payments, according to a previous Shorthorn article.

The location is being run as a special events center during the week, Ford said, and will book live bands for the public on Fridays. Ford said he has been looking for this opportunity for about seven years.

"I wanted an events center we could do parties, high school reunions, UTA functions, birthdays, weddings — you know, just a big place where anybody can gather," Ford said.

This is the first special events center in downtown Arlington, said Tony Rutigliano, president of Downtown Arlington Management Corporation.

South Street Patio makes downtown Arlington more of a destination, Ford said. The goal of many business leaders in Arlington is to create an entertainment street. On one side of South Street is Levitt Pavilion, which books outdoor live concerts, Ford said. On the other side is South Street Patio, and in between are restaurants and bars, Ford said.

"When you go to Austin, Texas, you go to Sixth Street," Ford said. "We want people to come to downtown Arlington and go to South Street."

Computer science junior Tim Ryan heard about South Street Patio by word of mouth. He used to go to Capital Bar about every other week and wanted to check out the venue with new management. Ford knows Arlington down to its heart, Ryan said.

"We definitely need as much as live music and good bands coming through Arlington as possible," Ryan said. "Keep cover charges away."

South Street Patio opened April 18 and hosted a CD release party for Brandon Steadman Band. The venue saw almost 500 people on opening night, said Rema Atiya, general manager of J. Gilligan's and South Street Patio. The weekend after, the venue saw about 300 people, she said. A cover charge will be avoided, Atiya said, and not above \$5 when there is one. More well-known

bands may require a cover charge.

“The atmosphere is a laid back patio feel,” Atiya said. “You can get a drink and sit on the patio or you can come in high heels and dance the night away.”

Any large events held at J. Gilligan's will spill over to South Street Patio, Ford said. The venue is already booked for every home Cowboys game and for some college games, such as UT-Austin games at AT&T Stadium, Atiya said. On game days, when an area of South Street Patio is rented out, an area of the venue will be open to the public. People will be able to come and go and watch the game at the patio.

“Randy does a lot of special events at [J. Gilligan's],” Ryan said. “South Street Patio gives them a whole new venue to host things at.”

Every Friday, or any time a band is booked at South Street Patio, J. Gilligan's will sell dollar tacos and people can order off the restaurant menu, Atiya said. The UTA discounts provided at J. Gilligan's will also apply to South Street Patio.

“I think the No. 1 goal is to show the UTA community that we are here,” Atiya said. “Having this venue will help bring that community here. You're not going to sit in a smoky bar. They'd rather sit at South Street Patio where the area is open.”

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