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Off the Rak's business off the charts

Closed by fire, restaurant rises stronger from ashes, with help from The Progress Fund

Ebensburg, PA – May 23, 2011 – Devastated by fire just seven months ago, and closed through early April, Off the Rak has reopened with a new interior and booming business.

The kitchen fire that shut down the 15-year-old Ebensburg restaurant took from the area one of its most versatile attractions. Featuring a full dining room, a casual deck, and a sports bar, Off the Rak offered something for everyone, drawing hungry people to Ebensburg from miles around.

Owner Bob Kolar will never forget the Oct. 29 fire. “When I walked in, the whole place was gone,” he says. The kitchen was destroyed, and the smoke damage ruined the other interior spaces. “I wouldn't wish that upon anyone,” he says. He never thought about quitting, though. “There was never a doubt in my mind that I would rebuild.”

Over time, Bob decided to do more than rebuild. He'd completely rejuvenate Off the Rak. The insurance claim, though, would only bring him back to where he started. He needed more capital. A bank referred him to The Progress Fund.

The Progress Fund saw Off the Rak's sound fundamentals and value to the community, and loaned \$500,000. “They just made my life a lot easier, relieving me of that part of the stress,” says Bob. That allowed Bob to refinance his debt, get through a tough winter, and come back stronger than ever.

The loan financed a complete rebuild of the bar, once all wood, but now cement-topped with a stone front and a first-in-the-region chill rail to keep cold the improved lineup of draft beers. The updated look continues with new tables, trim work, recessed lighting and ceramic tiles.

Just six weeks after reopening, business is up 40 percent over the same period last year. Old customers have come back to see the new interior, and the word of the chill rail and other

upgrades has drawn new visitors. “Money from The Progress Fund helped me out in that respect,” says Bob, “to create the buzz.”

For directions or interviews, call Bob Kolar at (814) 418-4146

For further information on The Progress Fund, call (724) 216-9160, or visit www.progressfund.org.

The Progress Fund is a vigorous non-profit loan fund that creates jobs and improves communities by providing entrepreneurial coaching and capital to small businesses in the travel & tourism industry. The Progress Fund serves 39 counties of Pennsylvania , the State of West Virginia , Western Maryland , and Appalachian Ohio. The Progress Fund was founded in 1997, and has made 350 loans totaling more than \$36.8 million to 205 enterprises, creating or preserving more than 2,396 jobs. The Progress Fund is an Equal Opportunity Lender.