



Buzz Orr/Staff Photographer

Kimberly and Scott Holstein of Wilmette, owners of Kim & Scott's Gourmet Pretzels, plan to open their first retail outlet in the Kohl Children's Museum, now under construction in Glenview.

Product with special twist gets Kohl Museum berth

By LYNNE STIEFEL
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Kim and Scott Holstein like to call it a "twist of fate."

The Wilmette couple, who own Kim & Scott's Gourmet Pretzels, met at a 1994 book signing by author Richard Bach.

"He writes books about soulmates and airplanes," the Holsteins wrote in a publicity handout. "We decided to fly high together inside a passionate pretzel business and nurture the universe with our inspired soft pretzels."

The analogy may be a stretch, but their business acumen appears to be right on target.

Ten years after launching their gourmet pretzel business, the Holsteins are poised to open their first retail outlet in the new Kohl Children's Museum, which is scheduled to open its doors in Glenview in October.

"We're very excited. It's a perfect fit. Kids are very partial about pretzels and we're very excited about being part of this

phenomenal museum," Kim Holstein said.

The 1,600-square-foot bakery and cafe will be located at the entrance of the new museum, under construction at Patriot Boulevard and West Lake Avenue.

In addition to selling refreshments, the bakery will allow children to create, twist and bake their own pretzels.

"The whole idea is to make it an interactive experience, to try to mirror the museum," Scott Holstein said.

The couple's three-year contract with Kohl is the latest in a series of business feats.

They began the business with two freezer chests in a studio apartment in Chicago's Lincoln Park neighborhood. The pretzels — stuffed with ingredients like spinach and feta cheese; sun-dried tomato and cream cheese; vegetarian chili; and chocolate crumb — caught on with coffee shops.

They began to sell them nationwide at bookstores, movie theaters, Starbucks and NASCAR races.

In 2002, they were picked as

winners of a new-product search competition sponsored by QVC, the cable television shopping service. They won two appearances on the channel, during which they sold 120,000 pretzels, they said.

They've since appeared on QVC another two dozen times.

Today, 50 employees hand twist 20 varieties of pretzels at the couple's 25,000-square-foot factory near downtown Chicago.

With success in the "quasi-wholesale" end, as Scott Holstein terms it, the couple wanted to branch out.

Retail has been a dream for both Scott Holstein, whose parents owned a Ben & Jerry's ice cream store while he was growing up in Glencoe, and Kim Holstein, who grew up in Texas.

Another of the couple's initiatives is "Pretzels for Peace," which contributes pretzels and monetary donations to organizations the Holsteins believe fight bigotry, promote peace and "make a positive difference."