

# The Republic

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## Brothers make dream a reality

### • Seymour entrepreneurs' business dreams realized as restaurant.

By Brian Blair

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SEYMOUR—Many days, Fred Gill goes home from work exhausted.

But his job of feeding others has substantially fattened his long-held dream of calling the shots in the business world. He vowed before ever leaving Ball State University, where he earned the Entrepreneurial Excellence Award, that he would soon own a restaurant.

"The entire class (at Ball State) looked up to him," says Donald F. Kuratko, director of the university's Entrepreneur Program. "He's always been a step ahead of everybody."

So it should come as no surprise that, at the age of 23, Fred Gill is head of a Seymour steak and seafood restaurant, Fred 'N Toby's at 304 Mill St.

And the BSU graduate already is looking to broaden his scope.

With the help of 19-year-old brother, Toby, Fred also leads the newly formed Gill Enterprises Inc. he formed with parents and partners, Steve and Janet Gill.

More than anything, the past four months in the food business have taught Fred anew the impor-

ance of flexibility—something he and Toby have embraced for years.

Each stands slightly more than 3 feet tall, living with a rare form of dwarfism called diastrophic dysplasia. The condition has forced the pair to make plenty of adjustments, ranging from their hand-controlled vans to their specially hemmed clothing.

So adjustments in business sometimes appear fairly manageable.

"I'm learning how to live with the idea that nothing ever is really written in stone," says Fred, referring to a near-constant recruiting of employees and adjustments in the restaurant's computer system.

I've learned that you can't always expect things to be fixed and unchanging."

Heck, even the business Fred runs with the part-time help of Toby, still a business student at Ball State, already is changing.

By January, the siblings will launch Gillies, a takeout pizza service operated from a spare back portion of their restaurant facility. "I'm not really sure where all this aggressiveness comes from," says mom, Janet, who has helped with some of the restaurant's bookkeeping. "I can't believe all the things



Fred Gill, left, and Toby Gill have opened a new restaurant in Seymour. The brothers plan to operate the steakhouse and seafood restaurant.

they've handled at their age."

Such as surgeries. And curious looks from people unaccustomed to seeing a pair of young men whiz past on their electric carts.

After all, if Fred now can be considered upwardly mobile in the business world, he can also be described as mobile, period.

"I'm (here) everywhere putting out fires," says Fred, sitting in the restaurant's 120-seat dining room that draws about 1,000 customers per week. "Sometimes, as soon as you get one fire put out, you've got another one."

Sure, parents helped their sons with the financial backing to buy the former Mill Street Restaurant and refurbish it inside and out.

"But Fred's the one who has masterminded all this," says his mom.

And Toby offers as much support as possible, serving as dining room host on weekends when he is home from college.

When I get out of school," says Toby, "I'll be able to be more involved."

The brothers mention that they work well as a team. The two who have shared a business dream frequently share a variety of ideas with each other.

In the process, watching them closely is none other than Ball State's Kuratko, who recently brought 19 BSU students to the restaurant for dinner. He came away impressed.

"Fred is," says Kuratko, "the perfect illustration of a business professor's dream."

A dream that, like his restaurant, is clearly reality.