

Steeler Country Beckons in OC
By Beth Ward
Staff Writer

OCEAN CITY It's a long way from the three rivers, Heinz Field and the hordes of Terrible Towel-waving fans, but Buxy's Salty Dog is definitely Steelers territory.

Owner Doug Buxbaum, a Johnstown, Pa., native, said the bar described as a local's favorite tries to not alienate customers who may not hail from the Steel City.

We like to say we're football friendly, Pittsburgh proud, he said.

Pittsburgh pride isn't hard to find in Buxy's with the walls packed with Pittsburgh memorabilia, most of it collected by Buxbaum from childhood. He said what is displayed is only a quarter of what he actually owns. They also have people bring in items for the walls as well.

We have a lot of neat stuff, he said.

Fans of any team will appreciate the specials on Sunday's "Football Frenzy" or the half-time buffet for Monday Night Football. But when the Black and Gold are playing, all of the 24 televisions and four plasma screens are tuned to the Steeler game.

During the games, Buxy's features some of the finest fare of Western Pennsylvania by way of pierogies and their take on Primanti Brothers Restaurant's sandwiches with the french fries and coleslaw piled on the sandwich, thanks to chef Matt Nicklas.

Buxbaum said he enjoys serving Iron City and I.C. Light since many people that drop by don't believe that he serves the Pittsburgh Brewing Company's signature beer.

"Even if you don't normally drink it you feel like you have to because you are supporting everyone back home," Buxbaum said.

Buxbaum said he considered buying property in Pittsburgh, but there was an opportunity with the Salty Dog.

He wanted to have a Pittsburgh-themed bar paying tribute to his roots. He also said through bartending for several years in the resort he found out about 30 percent of the tourists in the area were from Western Pennsylvania.

After finishing his eighth summer in business, Buxbaum said he has big plans in the works for the saloon. Even before he makes the changes, Buxy's had come a long way from the old Salty Dog, an Ocean City bar for about 15 years.

Rather than getting rid of the long-held name, Buxbaum added the nickname he shares with his father and grandfather to the saloon's title.

When he took over the Salty Dog, Buxbaum said it was "a little rundown."

"Before you wouldn't even think of ordering a french fry there let alone bringing in a child," he said.

He said that has all changed with their simple fare and friendly service.

"It's really simple, we provide a comfortable atmosphere with really great service," he said. "It all goes together. You can get a cold beer anywhere in town and 80 percent of the places serve the same hamburger, but if you can have a waitress with a smile."

Buxbaum credits the staff for the success of the bar and restaurant, in particular Mandie Fulton, who he said "runs the show" and his wife Annie, who handles the boutique as well as their advertising.

The staff also helps to get the word out, Buxbaum said.

"Sell yourself to the staff first, then the locals," he said. "Locals are the toughest critics, if you sell to them, they'll help sell you to the tourists."

Buxbaum said giving back to the community is also an important part of Buxy's. That's why one of the many charity events they participate in is the annual Chili Cookoff. After winning in 2003 and 2005, Buxbaum said they were "robbed" in this year's competition.

He added that what sets their chili apart from others is having the ingredients come from Pittsburgh.

Even though the Steel City seems far away, patrons can feel like they are in the heart of Pittsburgh at Buxy's Salty Dog Saloon. People longing for some Black and Gold can grab their Terrible Towel and join the hordes at the 28th Street bar.