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ARTICLE: by Brian Brown - reporter

Pita franchise coming to Springfield

A Toronto-based fast-food alternative with more than 300 locations is entering the Springfield market.

Pita Pit franchisees Dave and Penny Inlow are planning to open their first unit in October at 1318 E. Battlefield Road, the site of a former Quiznos eatery in the Fremont Shopping Center.

Penny Inlow said she and her husband spent \$25,000 on franchise fees to buy rights to the Springfield area, and with remodeling work and other startup costs, she expects to spend roughly \$200,000 to open the first Springfield location.

The couple tries to eat healthy when they eat out, she said, and after Dave Inlow visited a Pita Pit in St. Louis, he knew that was something they'd like to bring to Springfield. Pita Pit is known for sandwich options such as the Chicken Crave, the Gyro and the Philly Steak on a Lebanese-style pita, according to PitaPit.com. The company also offers smoothies, soups and salads.

"My husband was in St. Louis on business and went to Pita Pit one day and just fell in love with its concept," Penny Inlow said. "It's fast and healthy, but it is something different than just a sandwich."

Ross Murray, listing agent with R.B. Murray Co., said the five-year lease was signed last week on the 1,900-square-foot property, though he declined to provide lease terms. Murray said the Fremont Shopping Center was selected because of its proximity to several health care providers and because it is a former restaurant site, which he said makes it easier to retrofit Pita Pit.

"(Pita Pit) does a lot of delivery, so it was a huge pull to be not only in the mix of the retail, but being right between the hospitals was a huge draw for them," Murray said. The Inlows hope to open a second location near downtown, Penny Inlow said, but they want to see how sales at their first store take off before they move forward with plans for a second site.