

**DEERFIELD
REVIEW**

THIS WEEK

Blockshopper21
 Calendar.....56
 Classified B19
 Crossword B16
 Death notices B17-B18
 Diversions B1
 Family Friendly B2
 Film Clips B6
 Fixer 55
 Food 52
 Library56
 Opinion 32
 Pet of the Week.....26
 Police.....24
 Showtimes B7
 Sports66
 Transfers20

TOP FIVE STORIES

1. Police Blotter

A rundown of crime and arrests in Deerfield. See this week's Blotter on page 24.

2. Outages texts

Residents can get text alerts on power outages. See story, page 53.

3. Bagel shop

Deerfield brothers Ronnie and John Rayyon have made Upper Crust Bagels a destination.

4. Breaking habit

The Lake County Health Department's Tobacco-Free Lake County program has launched a nicotine-replacement therapy support program.

5. Danny Katz

Danny Katz, a senior at Deerfield High School, qualifies for three events in AAU Junior Olympics.

Firm brings kosher, halal meals to the masses

BY LAURA BOLLIN
 Contributor

Mary Ann Jackson, president and founder of Deerfield-based My Own Meals, has spent her life working in the food industry.

Now she creates kosher and halal meals for soldiers and others abroad.

"When (Secretary of State) Hillary Clinton was on the news talking about how 600 cases of halal MREs (meals ready to eat) were being sent to Libya, those were our meals," Jackson said. "You will see us out there. You won't know that it is us. We are small, but important."

Jackson, who began working for Beatrice Foods in Chicago, founded her own company in 1990.

"We do shelf-stable, healthy kosher and halal meals for consumers, institutions and the military," Jackson said.

Kosher meals meet the religious requirements of the Jewish faith. Meals cannot mix meat and dairy, and gelatin, cheeses and other kosher products have to pass rabbinical inspections. All of the meals are microwaveable. Chicken, stews and pasta dishes are also available.

"We even separate the equipment and pipes in our factories, and clean them all, we boil or steam all of our equipment," Jackson said.

"The halal meals meet the requirements of the Muslim faith," she noted. "You cannot use anything with alcohol, and a lot of flavorings use alcohol, which is forbidden. All of the meat has to be from an animal that is slaughtered by a Muslim."

A secondary company, called J&M Food Products, manages the halal side of the operation.

Jackson said that her business remains very necessary.

"I have separate beef stews, one that is kosher and one that is halal," Jackson said. "They use different meat and different equipment, and different prayers are said over each animal."

"They are different, even though they would probably taste the same if you tried them."

Jackson said she enjoys the daily challenges of her job.

"For example, getting spinach for kosher meals shouldn't be too hard, spinach is spinach," Jackson said. "There is one spinach company that is acceptable in the most Orthodox of communities."

"Due to the weather this past growing season, the spinach fields have too many bugs, and the rabbis won't allow spinach to be processed as kosher spinach. That was a challenge. My job is always hard, but that is what makes it fun."

Joe D'Onofrio is the chief financial officer of the company.

"What I like about our company is that we get to help a lot of people," said D'Onofrio. "When New Orleans flooded, we were there with our meals."

"When there's a war in the Middle East or someone climbs a mountain, they have our stuff. That gives you a good feeling."

For information on My Own Meals, call (847) 948-1118 or visit www.myown-meals.com.



ABOVE: Joe Jackson works in the test kitchen. Jackson did new product development work for the company on two items that were taken to market.



LEFT: Mary Anne Jackson, president of My Own Meals, Inc., talks on the phone in the meal-production facility.