

## New store steps into Short Pump

July 18, 2011 by Amy David

A Maryland native has left the construction business to step into the Short Pump retail scene.

**Steve Hentschel** will open Richmond's first **Flip Flop Shops** franchise in Short Pump Town Center in August.



The Atlanta-based chain, as its name implies, known for offering a variety of name-brand sandals and flip-flops. The company was founded in 2004 and began franchising in 2008 and has 40 shops in the United States, Canada, Guam and the Caribbean. Hentschel, 40, has been the manager of a Maryland construction business for the past 14 years, but last year he decided it was time for a change.

"The construction industry has been affected by the economy, and it was doing okay, but not like it was," Hentschel said.

After one of his wife's friends opened a Flip Flop Shops location, he researched the franchise concept and left his construction job at the end of May.

"I've wanted to have my own business my whole life," he said. "We went online and checked it out and thought it was awesome. There's a lot more competition, and I liked the concept of the franchise. You have that support."

The next step was finding a location. And from Maryland he found a space in Short Pump that had recently opened up.

Hentschel found an 800-square-foot space on the second floor at Short Pump that previously was home to a perfume shop. Hentschel said a build-out is underway.

According to the Flip Flop Shops website, the cost of opening a franchise location ranges from \$167,300 to \$272,500, including \$30,000 that must be paid to the company as an initial franchise fee. Franchise owners also pay a 5.5 percent weekly royalty of gross sales.

Flip Flop Shops carry about 30 different brands, and Hentschel said he'll start out with eight in his shop.

"I'll start out with the core brands and the top sellers of each brand," he said. "We'll feel out the market and see what Richmond really likes."

He's hired four people to staff the shop, including a shop manager to run the store, as he still lives in Maryland. Hentschel will commute to the store a couple of days a week.

Hentschel's shop is slated to open Aug. 4, and he's already look at a potentially bigger footprint.

"I've signed on for two more locations, and we're looking at the D.C. and Baltimore areas now," he said. "I may also look at another location in Richmond depending on how it goes."



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