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JOUR 471

Cocky Rooster meets Gamecock country

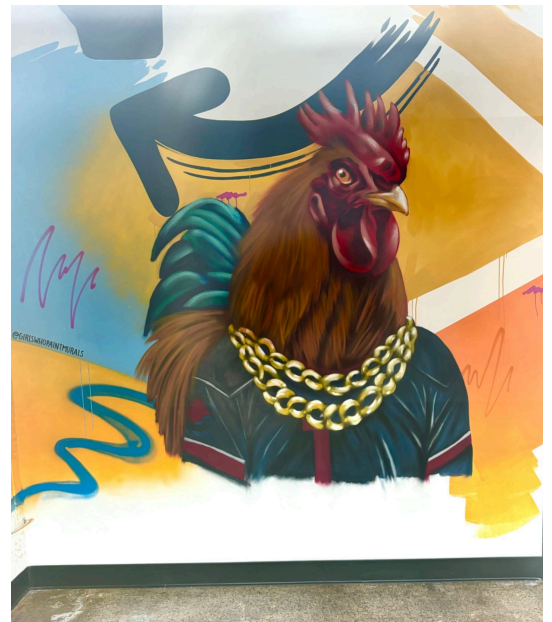
By: Katie Cannon

At the age of 10, Alexa Lyons was introduced to the restaurant business, which would lead her to the position of managing director of the new Cocky Rooster franchise in Columbia at just 22 years old.

Alexa is originally from Suffolk, Virginia where she grew up working for her dad who owned a number of restaurant franchises in that area.

“I kind of grew up like, just prepping with him for anything that he needed, helping him out. I started working as a server and as a host when I was 15, and I've been at one of his restaurants since this past summer.” said Alexa.

Alexa is currently in her second year here at the University of South Carolina after transferring from a small school in North Carolina. It was this change that sparked the idea of having a location in the Columbia area.



The Cocky Rooster mural inside their new franchise location in Five Points Columbia.
Photo by Katie Cannon

“When I came here, my dad loved Columbia, and one of his friends knew one of the CEOs for the Cocky Rooster, and he was like, that's the most perfect place to franchise the Cocky Rooster is Columbia, and he had mentioned it to me, and I was like, that's a genius idea.” said Alexa.

Her dad, Curtis Lyons, became a franchisee for Cockey Rooster and from there, Cockey Rooster and its team flocked to Five Points where they built its nest in the heart of our Gamecock community.

Flew the coop

Cockey Rooster had its debut in 2020 with the first location in Richmond, Virginia specializing in wings, tenders and sandwiches along with 16 unique house made sauces. CEO and co-founder Luke Phillips says there is a reason why they are cocky.

“We consider ourselves cocky. We have the best food in the game when it comes to wings, tenders and sandwiches. Everything is scratch made. Sauces fresh, never frozen. We put a lot of pride into our prep and making our food and making quality products.” said Phillips.



After seeing its success, the Cockey Rooster team decided they were going to franchise the concept, with their first expansion being down south.

“We started about five years ago now, and then started franchising last year, and John and Curtis were our first franchisees, and we were very happy to

Cockey Rooster is on Devine Street in the space previously occupied by Sushi Yoshi. Photo by Katie Cannon

hear that they wanted to go to Columbia, South Carolina first. It's a great spot to go with our brand at the Cockey Rooster.” said Phillips “So the cocky rooster wasn't actually made for Columbia, the Gamecocks, but it kind of ties in perfectly with the branding down there, with the school and with everything you guys have going on.”

Being a college student herself, Alexa discusses how the franchise aims to connect with the Gamecock community by using the similarities in their branding to create an association.

“It is not just a franchise, we can hopefully work with the school, somehow, work with the mascot, or even teams so we slowly grow kind of into the name as the Cockey Rooster.” She said, “A dream would be catering like the women's basketball team for an event, or any type of like school club, that kind of thing, and just kind of connecting it with the school a little.”

Alexa says that she and her team have been handing out gift/business cards and talking to faculty, students and staff to network and spread the word about Cockey Rooster.

Located off of Devine Street in Five Points, Cockey Rooster plans to be open Sunday-Wednesday from 11 a.m. to 11 p.m., and Thursday-Saturday, from 11 a.m. to 2 a.m. They have a capacity of 24 seats and will offer services including dine-in, take-out and delivery.

The grand opening is scheduled for Mar. 20th where the team plans on doing giveaways, hosting a live DJ and getting USC's very own Cockey to engage with future potential customers.