

SMALL BUSINESS

Fun is the key for owners of Batavia driving school

Students who want to grab the car keys before they can take their school's driver's education class soon will have another option in Batavia.

Green Light Driving School opens next month at 34 N. River St., offering classes not only for first-time drivers but also refresher courses for high-risk drivers.

The Batavia business is the second location for owners Chris and Lisa Pearson, who opened Green Light Driving School in Elgin in October 1997.

"We had a dream of starting a business," Chris Pearson said. "We like the idea of working with people."

Before opening their own business, Chris had been doing occupational safety training for businesses, and Lisa dealt with teenagers while a social worker with Catholic Charities.

"I like working with teenagers," Lisa said. "They're a great age to work with. You can influence their lives."

When the Pearsons were considering business ventures, neither thought of a driving school.

A relative with a thriving printing business gave them the idea, Chris said. He said if he was starting out



today he would open a driving school, Chris said.

"I grew up working summer jobs in factories, and I didn't like the idea of doing the same thing every day," Chris said.

"This way we can drive where we want, have different students on a regular basis. ... We're working with people and have a flexible schedule."

Classes are held from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. Monday, Tuesday and Thursday for five-week sessions, with a second time slot from 12:15 to 2:15 p.m. in the summer.

Since the Pearsons are both owners and instructors, they can reschedule without much trouble if necessary, Chris said. They also will pick up their students at home or at their jobs on days when they practice driving, he noted.

The Pearsons also enjoy the fact that they control the atmosphere of the classes, he said.

They try to make it more interest-



Lisa and Chris Pearson are expanding their Green Light Driving School in Elgin to Batavia next month. Daily Herald Photo/Mary Beth Nolan

ing and fun for the students, which makes the job more enjoyable for them.

For example, instead of having students read their textbooks in class, they read materials at home and have discussions in class, Chris said.

Pearson also made one class more interesting last year when he worked with the local police department to let students try to do field sobriety tests while wearing goggles that reflect what a person sees when drunk.

"You've got to learn first," Chris said. "But, I think, you learn better if you are having fun."

The student class, which costs \$300, includes 30 hours of classroom instruction, six hours behind the wheel and six hours of observa-

tion, and also requires 25 hours of additional time with a parent or parent-approved driver, which are all state mandated.

If needed, the Pearsons also will help students fulfill the 25 hours of practice outside of class.

The refresher course, coordinated with Nationwide Insurance, includes three hours behind the wheel and one hour in the classroom. It costs \$125 for high-risk drivers and \$120 for seniors.

For information about classes, call (630) 879-7700 for the Batavia location or (847) 488-1500 for the Elgin site.

Kathryn Grondin's column runs Fridays. To submit your business news, call (630) 587-8627 or fax (630) 587-8639.