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NEWS

BIKINI BABES' GIG A SWEET MEAL TICKET

By **MARINA VATAJ**

October 22, 2006 -- Meet America's hardest-working beauty queens - Middle American pageant veterans living in New York City rent free in exchange for hustling cocktails in their bikinis at a Times Square hot spot.

For the young beauties, it's a shot at becoming a top model.

For the customers, it's wall-to-wall



HOT DISHES: Jennifer Johnson and Angelina Shipilina wait a table at the Hawaiian Tropic Zone...

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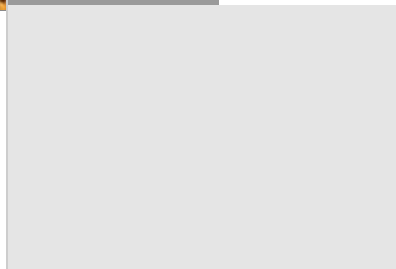
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lovelies who can juggle drinks and dinner orders while looking gorgeous.



Owners of the Hawaiian Tropic Zone, an 800-person-capacity restaurant that just opened on 49th Street, recruited ambitious women from pageant competitions across America as its first wave of bikini-clad employees. Those women have since been joined by 82 local waitresses.

The out-of-towners live in a dorm-like apartment on the Upper East Side - it's "The Real World" meets "Gidget."

"It is a great opportunity for me to get closer to my dreams of becoming a model," said Jennifer Johnson, a 26-year-old who left her job teaching fourth grade in Dallas after winning the Miss Texas Hawaiian Tropic contest.

Her roommate and fellow Texan, Sarah Jo Lammers, a 24-year-old from Corpus Christi with a finance degree, bolted the business world to pursue a modeling dream here.

The Texans live with eight other recruits in two three-bedroom pads in an eight-story walkup on the Upper East Side owned by Dennis Riese, who owns the Hawaiian Tropic Zone with PM nightclub honcho Adam Hock.

Under the terms of their Hawaiian Tropic Zone deals, the models live rent free for six months, pay \$200 for the seventh month, \$400 the eighth and \$600 a month until they leave. They also get discounted gym memberships and tanning, because they're required to take part in both.

In return, they weave in and out between crowded tables as waitresses for the restaurant, welcoming guests, serving drinks and taking dinner orders while wearing Nicole Miller bikinis.

Every night is a beauty pageant. The waitresses strut their stuff twice a shift in front of the usual crowd of suit-clad bankers and brokers who quiet down and cast their paper ballots for the hottie they most admire.

The pageant winner gets a \$100 bonus on top of \$100 for each eight-hour shift and tips as high as \$100 per table.

"I went out and bought shoes, which are everywhere in this city," Johnson said, recalling a whopping gratuity from one admirer.

But the guys "are never inappropriate or touchy-feely" Johnson said. "Mostly, they just ask to take pictures with us."

When they aren't working, "we like to stay in a lot," Johnson said. "But when we do go out, we respect each other. That means no boys come back with us."

"No if, ands or buts," Lammers said. "If there's a guy here after midnight, we kindly ask them to leave."

marina.vataj@nypost.com

Celebrity Photos: Best of 2006

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