



Reducing the Electric Bill While Boosting the Brand CASE STUDY: Retrofitting the Neon to LED at Virginia Diner

LONG LEGACY

When the Governor recognizes a business in an official Proclamation, calling its 85th anniversary to the attention of all the citizens of the Commonwealth of Virginia, you realize its significance and reputation. Such was the case with the legendary Virginia Diner of Wakefield, Virginia that recently celebrated 85 years of serving Virginians.

“We read a Holiday Signs Newsletter which spoke of LED over neon,” said Christine Epperson, President of Virginia Diner. “It intrigued us enough to ask questions...particularly as we were going to have to replace some of the neon lettering which had stopped working,” she said.

The diner utilizes a channel letter sign at the building’s storefront, and a two-sided pylon sign in the parking lot out on the main street with channel letters across the top. Both were originally lighted with neon tubing, but the neon was very faded and partially out so we upgraded the lighting to LED, which provided a fresher look for their famous brand.



TAKING CARE OF A VIRGINIA ICON

“We take pride in and make an effort with the appearance of the building and grounds,” said Christine. “The sign is a definite draw for our traveling guests, particularly at night. If a building’s appearance is rough, it makes a customer question the care they will receive from within,” she said.

The visual results after the upgrade are easy to see: “Both the road sign and the building sign are much brighter and crisper,” said Christine.

She commented that had the signs not been repaired for their special 85th Anniversary celebration it would have been embarrassing! Plus the neon was causing many service calls that took time and money away from management to work on improving other aspects of the business. They liked the fact that LED was basically maintenance-free and used much less energy than neon, but they haven’t been in use long enough to measure the exact power savings.

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Photos above of the signage converted from neon to LED lighting in advance of the company’s 85th Anniversary celebration from their Facebook page.

**“The new LED-lit
signs are
much brighter
& crisper
than the old neon.”**



WHY CHANGE TO LED?

Christine listed four reasons why Virginia Diner chose to replace their neon signs with LED, on which they are hoping to realize a return on the cost in 3 years:

- 1) No more expensive neon repairs and dealing with signage down time;
- 2) Less electricity cost;
- 3) Longer life of lighting components;
- 4) Friendlier for the environment.

Since 1929, along what used to be a dusty highway in southeastern Virginia, the Diner has been selling ham biscuits and Brunswick Stew to hungry travelers. Virginia Diner began as a refurbished railroad dining car and as its popularity increased, dining rooms were added.

“Established in the heart of Virginia Peanut country, it was only natural that peanuts ended up on the Virginia Diner menu,” explains the Virginia Diner website. Today, Virginia Diner nuts and confections are available at fine retailers nationwide as well as on the internet. Known as “The Peanut Capital of the World”™, Virginia Diner is truly a “Legend in a Nutshell”™. The new LED lighting recently installed in their branding signs will shine out their good name to customers for many years to come!

“We set a deadline and were pushing Holiday Signs to help us have the sign ready before our anniversary. They were quick to respond, quick to get us a quote, and quick to get it all in place,” commented Christine about her experience with retrofitting neon to LED.



The scene around Wakefield's Virginia Diner.



Photos: Top left- New LED units in wall letters before the faces were re-installed; Bottom left- Old neon tubing in road sign that was replaced with more efficient LED lighting; Top right- LED-lit wall sign lit up at night; Bottom right- Justina Ortiz and Chelsy Brown welcome guests at Wakefield's Virginia Diner, open since 1929.

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