

StatelineBusiness

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Janesville coffeehouse connects with groups

By Jeff Green
For StatelineBusiness

JANESVILLE-- There are three things common to conventional coffeehouses: a rack of candy bars and goodies at the checkout counter, a bombardment of knickknacks blanketing the walls, and grandiose commercial advertisements to accompany them.

But Mocha Moment, 1121 Center Ave., likes to do things a little differently by excluding these features. Co-owners Steve and Kathy Dean say they aim for their coffeehouse to have a soothing atmosphere that feels like home.

Steve said he hopes to provide a place where people can relax and be comfortable.

"It should be warm and peaceful," he said.

And to prevent distractions, the business doesn't even have a phone.

Though it can be an inconvenience for customers seeking information (and reporters, too), Steve said he hopes to minimize their commercial effect. They instead use e-mail for communicative needs.

"With the phone ringing, you can't relax or pay attention to people here," he said. "(Communication) can be difficult, but things are always a trade-off."

Mocha Moment opened in January 2003 when Steve, a former Oakhill Christian School teacher, decided to take up a different career path and start the coffeehouse with his family.

For the location, they chose a vacant lot overlooking the woods, giving the coffeehouse a Walden-esque feel. Steve, 53, said the building itself is one of the primary factors that draws people in.

"It's pretty and classy," he said. "The landscape makes it feel secluded and adds to a space-away feeling. It's quite the place to watch birds."

Steve said that some customers come to feel like a part of the place. He said they donate flowers or squirrel or bird feeders to add to the natural environment.

One customer even brought in a sign he purchased at a garage sale that says on it "mocha my day."

The coffee shop owners also give back to the community.

They donate one cent of every coffee and espresso sale towards the Rock County Habitat for Humanity and Everyone Cooperating to Help Others (ECHO), a Janesville non-profit group dedicated to helping low-income individuals and families.

Over the past several weeks, the coffee house has opened on Sundays during which they donate all of their gross sales towards different charities. As of Jan. 6, they donated \$612 to ECHO, \$715 to the Salvation Army and more than \$2,200 towards an ex-employee's relative who is experiencing severe medical problems.

They also serve as a gathering place in the community. A book club called Literary Moment, a Mac Interest group and a knitting club use the coffee house as a meeting spot.

Judith Detert-Moriarty, who first started the Janesville knitting group, said they relocated to Mocha Moment in 2003 when the former coffee house they met at closed.

She said the Deans made them feel more than welcome.

"(Steve) even increased the wattage in the light bulbs so we could see our needlework better," Detert-Moriarty said. "We also initially had a conflict with their open mic night and he asked a band to change times so we could have our regular time."

The knitting group finds Mocha Moment to be a perfect place for chatting and getting together.

"The food there is great, the prices are right and it has a great atmosphere," Detert-Moriarty said.

Steve said that additional features customers praise are their free wireless Internet service, the drive-through window and the coffee house's method of payment. They use a moneybox and coffee containers that face the customers.

"There's trust and community and customers like that," Steve said. "It adds to the welcome feeling."