

Sweet Espressions gets sweeter

Local coffee shop now sells candy and fulfills owner's dreams

BY MARTHA TILLMON
Staff Reporter

Kirksville just got a little sweeter, thanks to the recent expansion of a local coffee shop.

Sweet Espressions owner Sarah Mitchell said the coffee shop, located on the northeast corner of The Square, expanded this fall to offer a large selection of sweets and snacks, including cotton candy, assorted nuts, brittles and, by special order, edible candy dishes.

"This is always something I imagined doing," Mitchell said. "I never thought it would be this big, though. I expected to have a small shelf and a cabinet of candy — never a full wing of the store."

Mitchell said Sweet Espressions' neighboring shop, The Stitching Post, moved locations earlier this year, leaving the lot empty.

She said she eventually leased the addition and decided to use it to fulfill her candy shop dreams. She decorated with brightly colored walls and wall-hangings shaped like wrapped candies, and stocked it with an assortment of products.

Mitchell said she purchases a majority of the candies and snacks from a Mennonite company, but also makes homemade brittles,



Baker Laura Geiman sorts through candy Monday at the newly expanded candy section of local coffee shop Sweet Espressions. Geiman moved to Kirksville one month ago to work at the shop.

Sam Gorden/Index

fudge and stained glass candies.

All of Mitchell's candies are priced between 10 cents and \$5.

Mitchell said she hopes that though Sweet Espressions already offers coffee, kettle corn, gelato,

breakfast and lunch options, the candy store will bring an even more diverse clientele.

She said the coffee shop running successfully next door allowed her to afford the candy venture, but she

hopes the new customers will allow for the candy store to be profitable.

It's difficult for a store in downtown Kirksville to make it without a strong backing from the community, Mitchell said, and offering

diverse products is helpful.

"The addition of the candy store just shows one more way the shop is stepping up their game," Sweet Espressions' customer Ellen Russell said.

Russell said she enjoys the comfortable, homey feel of the coffee house and said she thinks that during the past year, with new banners outside the shop, Sweet Espressions seems more put together.

"The candy store has brought a lot more excitement to the store," junior Megan Bryde, Sweet Espressions employee, said. "It's really amped up the environment."

She said she loves seeing customers' faces light up when they notice the new addition, and the only concerns she has heard from customers are worries that the candy shop could ruin their diet.

Mitchell said she considers this addition as the completion of her original concept for Sweet Espressions, but said that she will continue to improve the shop with new furniture and new items.

She said her next project involves starting a care-package delivery system, which she said she hopes parents of high school and university students will use as a gift source.

Mitchell said she plans to have a ribbon-cutting ceremony for her newly expanded space during mid-October.

Traveling exhibit visits Kirksville

Painter and journalist visit 114 counties to create an exhibit now displayed in Kirksville

BY ASHLEY JOST
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Every exhibit at the Kirksville Arts Association gallery tells a story, but not all are as extensive as the story told by painter Billyo O'Donnell and journalist Karen Glines.

This month's exhibit features work from the duo, who spent seven years traveling across all 114 counties of Missouri — and the independent city of St. Louis — painting and writing about each area they passed through.

"Painting Missouri" is a collaborative effort between O'Donnell and Glines, who made separate journeys across the state to tell about and show others their home state. The traveling exhibit, "Painting Missouri" currently is displayed at the Arts Association on The Square until Nov. 10.

O'Donnell and Glines met while working on the Katy Trail Art Project during 2001 in St. Louis, where they shared an interest in working together on a book about Missouri. This became "Painting Missouri" and a gallery exhibit.

"It's a project of love of where we're from, who we are and our place and time in Missouri," O'Donnell said.

It wasn't until Glines went to a writer's workshop at Ball State University during 2001 and heard about a landscape art project another group was working on that she decided the project was something she wanted to pursue.

Convincing O'Donnell was an easy task — he said he loved her idea as soon as he heard it.

"The one thing people don't realize is there was no money involved in this," O'Donnell said. "We didn't have a grant. It was all out of our own pockets."

O'Donnell said they contacted the University of Missouri Press, which expressed some doubt about the idea before the Press decided to make a book deal.

O'Donnell said he had about three paintings for every county. Most of the pieces are landscapes, and almost all of the paintings have coordinates of the location where he worked on them written on the back.

"I haven't sold any of the paintings yet," he said. "The plan was to sell the paintings, but it just hasn't happened yet. This project is one of those things where we just had to believe in the project."

He said he had to sell other work during the seven years while he was traveling for the project to make money. O'Donnell said there were multiple times when he wasn't sure he would have enough money to continue, but he said he made it work.

"I don't think I'll ever make my money back on this project," he said. "It was something I really wanted to do, so I did it."

Glines, who left her position with AOL to pursue the project, said the project was eye-opening to her as a Missouri native who has lived her entire life in the state without "delving into some of its most beautiful areas."

One of her favorite counties to visit was Dent County, Glines said, because a segment of the Trail of Tears where the Cherokee passed through to Oklahoma ran through it.

O'Donnell and Glines never traveled together during the seven years, she said, and didn't share their work with one another until almost two years into the project. Glines said she would go to the studio to write and hope her work would correlate with his, only to find out that about 80 percent of the time, their work matched perfectly.

"A lot of the things we did were serendipitous," Glines said. "The pieces fell together so well."

She said the Press for the project requested that they highlight more permanent aspects or structures of the counties so the book would be more timeless.

Glines said the published book has sold 5,500 books and has gone through its third printing through the Press. She said her understanding is the Press currently is deliberating about whether the book should go for its fourth print.



Submitted Photos

Above and below, painter Billyo O'Donnell paints two different landscapes across Missouri during the seven years he worked on his and the writer Karen Glines' "Painting Missouri" project. O'Donnell said since the project was completely out-of-pocket, he often times slept in his van, despite snow, sun or rain.



Judy Neuweg, Kirksville Arts Association director, said she was excited to bring a painter who's known across the State for his work.

A reception for the exhibit will be held at 7 p.m., Oct. 11 in gallery, Neuweg said, and O'Donnell will be there to sign books and talk about his work.

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