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College Hill Coffee Company - just like Cheers

Contributed By Malinda Hartong

Tina Stoeberl stops to greet people by name as they pass her by as she sits at the counter. Tina asks about their latest trip. She doesn't sit long, just long enough to finish her small cup of yogurt. As always, she sees more to be done.

Tina has been a member of College Hill Forum, Vice President of Community Council and a business association member. She bought College Hill Coffee Company and Casual Gourmet from friends, taking ownership in January. She lives a few blocks from the coffee company, and feels connected to the neighborhood. But she says this is not really HER place... she's just watching over it. It really belongs to the College Hill community.

On January 1, Tina put out an invitation for folks to stop over to help as she made changes to the interior. She was overwhelmed with the response-- about 40 people pitched in. Tina says, "People just started showing up!" They totally transformed the place in 10 days, scrubbing floors, building shelves, running errands, arranging all the nifty imported coffee and kitchen accessories and gift items Tina bought. Tina remembers Marianne Mundy running all over town late one night looking for a floor buffer. Marianne says of Tina, "she's a dear... she fed us."

Elaine Ludwig and husband Robert of College Hill have been enjoying a leisurely cup of coffee and a muffin, sitting and reading the paper in a cushy chair together every weekend for three or four years. Elaine and other neighbors "spent hours cleaning, rearranging, and just basically doing what needed to be done. Tina took photos as we worked and displayed them in the shop when she reopened. I think we all felt a bit of ownership... it was work but it was fun being involved. At times it felt like a big neighborhood party. It was a real community project. This is one of the things I love about College Hill - the community spirit."

Rich, warm coffee-colored walls and cozy furniture greet visitors, inviting them, as the sign says, to "eat, sit,



Tina Stoeberl takes a second to sip a frothy coffee drink and sniff the peach pie fresh from the oven.

chat, chill.” Not only did Tina and the neighborhood helpers transform the atmosphere, Tina exponentially expanded the hours and the menu, opening early daily, and staying late on Friday and Saturday nights. Local musicians, from dulcimer players to jazz musicians, work for tips on Saturday nights from 7:30 to 9:30, which are already booked into 2007. On a recent Saturday, local artists donated their time and their tips to a hospice organization to memorialize a recently-passed musician. There is a list of upcoming events and a community bulletin board near the back door. Hours are 8:30-4 Sunday, closed Monday, 6:30-6:30 Tues - Thurs, 6:30am-10pm Friday, 8:30-10pm Saturday.

The menu offers a large variety of options for getting three square a day, whether a leisurely meal or a quick bite. After six months of trial and error, Tina’s secret-recipe quiche muffins are ready for hungry commuters on the go, perfect to pair with any of the coffees or other drinks. Tina is also first to say its a team effort. Theresa Perkins, the manager, has been here nine years. She puts foam on a cappuccino that looks like snow-capped Mount Everest. Joe “The Pie Guy” is a whiz at goodies fresh from the oven, baking what Tina calls “the real deal”, and filling the place with an aroma just like grandmother’s house. Homemade chili and guacamole are featured, as well as soups and sandwiches, quiche, and more. The glass case in front is filled to overflowing with fresh baked goods. With no room to spare, the top of the copper and wood bar is covered with classic glass cake stands topped with pies, cheesecakes, torts, giant cookies, “killer” fudge brownies, monstrous muffins and then some.

In addition to providing breakfast, lunch, dinner, and dessert, Tina is always on the hunt for perfect trinkets and gifts to fill her shelves, ready for the next birthday or special event. She looks forward to the upcoming holidays, and eagerly anticipates putting a handmade candy cane on all the gifts she’ll send out at Christmas this year, the same candies that were recently featured on the Food Network. She also calls these “the real deal”, in a huge variety of wonderful flavors.

At the end of each day, Tina may be tired from all the hard work but is all smiles, happy her neighborhood is taking ownership and sharing her love for the business. Tina says, “its like Cheers without the liquor.” Then, while sitting at the counter for just a minute, she stops to greet another neighbor by name.

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