

## Local Business

### The Cappuccino Comes to Chestnut Tree As Princeton Resident Follows Her Dream

Fresh from receiving official certification from the American Barista & Coffee School in Portland, Ore., Elizabeth Acevedo, a four-month Princeton resident, has found a niche in community retail, and has every intention of making it work.

"This is my dream, my passion, and of course there's going to be a risk," she said, as she served up a perfect 16-ounce cappuccino at the new coffee bar at Princeton Shopping Center's Chestnut Tree Books. The bar, which opened two weeks ago, is located toward the back of the store's promenade level, and is intended to bring a new dynamic to the three-year enterprise.

And, as is often seen with locally owned Princeton retail, this operation supports another local: Small World Coffee supplies the beans here. "I realized Small World's reputation, and it just made a lot of sense," said Chestnut Tree's owner Ira Kaye, who added that

Small World had also supplied training and planning. "They sat down with us and were very supportive: because I knew nothing about this."

That was, of course, before he met Ms. Acevedo, who was referred to him by David Newton, vice president of Palmer Square Management, who knew that she had been looking for a spot to get started. "I had been trying to get a location and while this is not my own store, it helps me administrate, get hands-on experience, and run the whole thing," she said, adding that she and her partner and fiancé, Pedro Gomez, are still looking for a more permanent spot. "This is good experience — I get to help Ira out, I'll train someone later on when I do get my own location, and be able to get out there."

Ms. Acevedo had been a five-year administrator and trainer at the Manhattan office of Aramark, a food service company, and before

that, she taught English for 20 years in Puerto Rico from fourth grade to the university level.

But she and Mr. Gomez had other designs, and the corporate world just wasn't cutting it. "This isn't work," Ms. Acevedo said. "If you enjoy what you're doing, it's never going to be 'work.'"

While the barista craft should not be downplayed, Ms. Acevedo said the overall experience in a coffee shop, or anywhere in retail for that matter, should never be overlooked.

"What we want to do is market the positive experience, where we get to educate the customer about the beans, about the drink, so before they walk out, they can more than taste that good quality coffee," she said.

"And hopefully we'll get to see the customer again and again."

Sometime around 1993, Princeton, particularly downtown Princeton Borough, suddenly became in-

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**NEW TO THE GAME, BUT UNAFRAID:** Elizabeth Acevedo is more than confident as she leaves the corporate world behind for a fresh roast. Ms. Acevedo, along with fiancé Pedro Gomez, are looking to open their own coffee shop in town. In the meantime, Ms. Acevedo is getting experience by managing the new coffee bar at Chestnut Tree Books at the Princeton Shopping Center.

(Photo by George Vogel)

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undated with coffee shops. Small World opened on Witherspoon Street; Starbucks was quick to follow; Bucks County Coffee, now closed, opened on Palmer Square West; and Halo Pub proved to be a popular spot. Nowadays, you can find people sipping espresso in the window of the Little Chef on Tulane Street, or at the Bucks County Coffee bar at McCaffrey's at the Shopping Center. Small World has also opened a successful take-out location on the burgeoning eastern end of Nassau Street.

Those coffee outlets have somehow managed to coexist in quite close proximity for more than a decade now, so Ms. Acevedo is undeterred. "You know what? There's still room for more, and there's still room for people to choose. I'm not competing with anybody because every one of those places will have their faithful customers."

On a recent trip to Seattle, the so-called capital of coffee, the volume of coffee shops amazed Ms. Acevedo. "On every corner, there was a different coffee shop, and you ask 'how do they do it?' The industry is huge."

So while the model for success exists, Ms. Acevedo, looking to start a new chapter in her life, disclosed another small secret: confidence.

"I've traveled, I've met people, and life is just an experience — it's beautiful. You meet people, you do different things, and I'm not afraid of it."

—Matthew Hersh

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### Business Roundup

The New Jersey Chapter of the American Institute of Architects (AIA) recently announced that **KSS Architects** has been awarded several honors, including the 2007 Architect of the Year and two design awards. KSS partner Allan Kehrt, FAIA, was named Architect of the Year, while the firm received an Honor Award for its Center for Academic Success at Kean University in Union, and the Merit Award for its Metasequoia Viewing Structure at the University of Pennsylvania's Morris Arboretum in Chestnut Hill, PA.

In retail business openings, **The Walking Company, Inc.**, a retailer of comfort footwear, will open a new store in Palmer Square on Nassau Street by the end of the month, Palmer Square representatives said this week; and **Princeton Mattress** is currently holding its grand opening at 20 Nassau Street in Princeton Borough.

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