



The historic Cash Store at Bayview Corner is the centerpiece of the Goosefoot nonprofit, whose goal is to create a sense of community and enhance commerce on South Whidbey.

## New, expanded businesses revitalize historic Bayview Corner

Nonprofit group drives Bayview Corner resurgence

By Carolyn Tamler

**THE CHARACTER OF** historic Bayview Corner in Langley is undergoing some changes that are bringing new energy to this local meeting place on South Whidbey Island. Four new businesses have joined the six existing ones, and one long-time retailer was able to move into a vacated building that doubles their retail floor space. Bayview Corner is a popular destination featuring retail shops, art exhibitions by local and regional artists and beautifully landscaped grounds.

Bayview Corner is partially owned

and operated by Goosefoot, a nonprofit organization, whose mission is to bring neighbors together to build a sense of place and community, preserve rural traditions, enhance local commerce and help create a healthy, sustainable future for South Whidbey Island. It is a model of sustainable development, showcasing green design elements throughout the buildings and in its landscaping.

An active schedule of community events at the historic Bayview Cash Store ensures return visitors and potential new clients coming through the door. Debbie Torget, chief operating officer of Goosefoot, calls it “our community-meets-commerce business model.”

“The interesting mix of businesses here at the Cash Store didn’t happen by accident,” Torget continues. “We think carefully about how businesses will sup-

port each other in terms of customer crossover and just plain being good neighbors. Tenants understand that even though they’re responsible for the success of their own business, that they are also a part of a building and grounds that they share with their fellow merchants and the community at large.”

The new additions make Bayview Corner an even more important Whidbey Island destination.

### HISTORY OF BAYVIEW CORNER

Since 1924, the Cash Store has served as a general store, gas station, feed store, food co-op and art gallery. The Cash Store, together with the Bayview School (1909) and Bayview Community Hall (1927), formed the nucleus that made Bayview Corner the crossroads of the South Whidbey community.

By the late 1990s, however, the Cash

Store was in disrepair. The owners were considering selling it, and the community was in danger of losing a central gathering place and an important piece of South Whidbey history.

In 1999, a chance meeting in the Cash Store parking lot ended up preserving the Cash Store and injecting new life into Bayview Corner. That conversation – between Nancy Nordhoff, South Whidbey resident and philanthropist, and Linda Moore, well versed in real estate law and economic development – resulted in a call to action. They co-founded a nonprofit organization called Goosefoot, and arranged for not only the purchase of the Cash Store, but also 22 acres surrounding the site.

Goosefoot's renovation of the Cash Store was completed in 2004. Recycled and reused materials were used where possible, including the old Langley water tower, which was dismantled to provide building materials used in the Cash Store and other Goosefoot projects. The redwood boards from the tower became doors, doorframes and wainscoting. The metal rods that held the round water tower together became railings, door pulls and handrails.

Nine businesses are currently located inside the Cash Store, with another in a restored garage just next door. As tenants of Goosefoot, they receive the benefits of group marketing efforts coordinated by the organization. Because enhancing local commerce is one of Goosefoot's primary goals, they work closely with individual merchants to help ensure their success, while marketing the Cash Store and Bayview Corner as a destination location on South Whidbey Island.

With the goals of environmental



**Brittany De Martini jumped at the chance to have her own business just months after graduating from the Gene Juarez Academy. The result is La Salon Bella.**

integrity, economic development and community vitality as an integrated solution, the Goosefoot Community Fund became the organizational home for this work. The redevelopment of the historic crossroads of Bayview Corner is Goosefoot's first project and demonstrates the result of community putting its money where its values are. Much has been accomplished in the few years since the renaissance of this community landmark, and now that tradition continues in 2008, with Bayview Corner thriving.

#### **HALF LINK BICYCLE SHOP MOVES TO LARGER QUARTERS**

Half Link Bicycle Shop is South Whidbey's primary bicycle shop offering new bikes, accessories, repairs, rentals and free trail and road maps. Owners David and Melinda Gardiner were among the first tenants when the Cash Store reopened in June 2004 after

extensive renovations.

Already bursting at the seams after their third year at Bayview, they jumped at the chance to move into a larger space when one became available. Their wish was granted, and on Jan. 2, Half Link moved into a renovated garage right outside the Cash Store, formerly home to Bayview Arts.

They now have more display room and have been able to increase their supply of rental bikes. And as chief mechanic, David relishes the extra room to indulge in his passion of fixing bikes. "The extra space helps us to better meet our customers' needs, so they can keep their bicycle purchases and repair local."

#### **SKYLARK WRITING STUDIO**

Molly Cook hopes that her new Skylark Writing Studio, on the first floor of the Cash Store, will become home to a range of writing activities for both beginning writers and those with more experience, who are looking for in-depth feedback.

The first classes were held in the new location in January. Cook brings more than 20 years of experience as a teacher, writer and poet to her new enterprise. Her writing experience and education give her the background to teach fiction, nonfiction, poetry and playwriting. "Everybody has a story. My job is to demystify the process and help writers find a way to write that story," Cook says.

In addition to an ongoing roster of class sessions and shorter workshops, Cook offers one-on-one coaching for writers who want individual attention. A weekly "Writing Workout" is also available on a drop-in basis.

A poet/performer for the 2006 Choochokam Arts and Loganberry



Cathy and Chung Tran have hit a home run with the Basil Café, a Pan-Asian restaurant that quickly became a local favorite.

festivals on the island, she also moderated the Poetry Panel for the 2007 Whidbey Island Writers Conference.

Cook also offers her services as a freelance writer to business clients and is available as a literary entertainer for special occasions and events.

#### PAN-ASIAN RESTAURANT OPENS ON SOUTH WHIDBEY

Chung Tran and his wife, Cathy, who own the Vietnamese restaurant Pho Huy in Mukilteo, had been hearing from some of their regular customers about how much a Pan-Asian restaurant was wanted on South Whidbey.

When the 3 Cats Café closed at the end of 2007 and that space became available, Chung's South Whidbey friends served as liaisons between Goosefoot and the Trans to facilitate their acquiring that space.

The Basil Café, a Pan-Asian grill and noodle soup house, opened at the Bayview Cash Store in February, and within a week people were being told they would need reservations if they wanted to dine on a Thursday, Friday or Saturday night.

Basil Café offers a fresh, wholesome and creative menu, inspired by a variety of Asian cuisines, including Vietnamese, Thai and Korean. "We use only the freshest ingredients and have affordable prices," says owner and head chef Chung Tran. "Great service is important to us. My wife Cathy and I want our customers to feel at home and like family when they walk into our restaurant."

Tran began his culinary training at the age of 15 in southern Vietnam. (The Tran family are ethnic Chinese

born in Vietnam.) His father taught cooking in there. Brother Ken and sister Tiffany were the first family members to emigrate to the U.S. in 1979 as part of the refugee exodus after the fall of South Vietnam. His parents could not afford to send anyone else.

In 1989, Chung and two other brothers left Vietnam and joined Ken and Tiffany in Hawaii where they worked in the restaurant industry as chefs and managers. In 1999, four of the six Tran brothers (Chung is "Brother No. 6") moved to the Seattle area to continue as restaurateurs. Ken has a sushi restaurant in Woodinville and the Tran family also owns and operates Pho Huy and The Ginger Palace by SeaTac airport.

Chung and Cathy are currently commuting from Renton, but they are planning to move to South Whidbey within a year or two: "We wanted to move to Whidbey for a long time. We couldn't believe our luck when this space became available. The Cash Store is a beautiful building, welcoming, and very community oriented. This is what we want Basil Café to be as well."

#### LA SALON BELLA CREATES UPSCALE EXPERIENCE

Brittany De Martini, owner/operator of La Salon Bella, knew she wanted to be a hairdresser when she was 5 years old. She used to imagine giving haircuts to members of her family. Born and raised on South Whidbey, she graduated from South Whidbey High School and completed an intensive 11-month course at the Gene Juarez Academy to obtain the professional qualifications needed to fulfill her dream. She worked for another salon on South Whidbey for seven months after her graduation, but when the space at Bayview became available, she jumped at the chance to have her own business.

De Martini acknowledges that she is blessed with having a large and supportive family network on the island. She originally had a five-year plan that would lead to owning her own business. Less than a year after graduation, her father became aware of the avail-

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able space at Bayview, and the family offered to help 19-year old Brittany create La Salon Bella.

In order to obtain the space from Goosefoot, De Martini had to present a business plan. Her plan assumes it will take two years to create a steady client base. She loves to show off the beautiful salon space that she designed and created. She explains: "I chose the name 'La Salon Bella' because bella means beautiful in Italian and that's how I want my clients to feel when they're in my chair and after they leave. My goal is to enhance, not replace, someone's own personal style, making the customer feel beautiful – or handsome – from the inside out." Her tastefully decorated salon communicates this feeling.

With an emphasis on five-star customer service, La Salon Bella offers a range of services. "I am providing my clients with the highest quality product and services, making them feel like guests at the salon, rather than customers," she said.

The salon is located next to the Fishmonger. She invites current and new customers to stop by and get acquainted and pick up samples of the product lines she carries. Monthly specials are offered to encourage customers to try new services and products.

#### **THE OPEN DOOR GALLERY + COFFEE OPENS MAY 1**

May, June and July will mark an extended grand opening for the Open Door Gallery + Coffee in Bayview Corner. Owner Louise Long is fulfilling her five-year-old dream to create an art gallery and coffee shop that will invite visitors to have a relaxed visit with a broad range of artistic talent. Long worked with her two managers, artists Sandra Whiting and Suzanne Newbold, to develop the business plan. As they prepared the document they realized, "We can do this business!"

In addition to the 25 artists who have already signed up to be part of this enterprise, Whiting and Newbold have been placed in charge of manag-

ing the upstairs and downstairs viewing spaces in the Hub, the central core of the Bayview Cash Store.

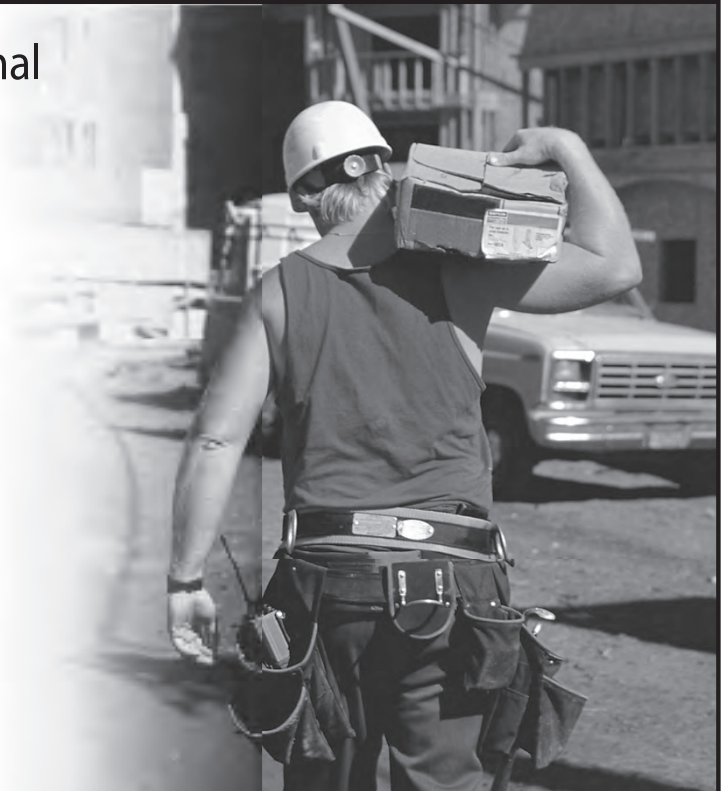
The new managers say they want to showcase as many artists as possible, and they envision Bayview Corner becoming the premiere art center for South Whidbey. They believe that the Open Door Gallery will be "a little gallery with a big presence."

Whidbey is an art lover's mecca, home to more than 100 regionally and nationally recognized artists, most of whom have shown here at one time or another. With this new gallery at Bayview, together with the established galleries in Langley, South Whidbey is now seen as a major arts destination in Western Washington.

The gallery will sell a diverse range of original art works by established Whidbey Island artists. The largest pieces will include furniture, masks, paintings and sculptures. The majority of the gallery will be devoted to smaller, more affordable pieces. ■

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