

## BUSINESS

# Elite Café opens in downtown Grover

## Offers choice of home-baked and healthy foods

EMILY WEAVER

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A new café has opened in Grover and on its menu comes a new choice of foods - healthy. But it is more than just a dream-come-true for dieters.

Restaurateur Dara Huskey, 25, is a case manager for special needs and mental health clients. But as busy and fulfilling as that can be, she longed to have her own restaurant. "I always worked in food service in college and while in grad school," she said, which made her hungry for her own business.

The desire was there, but she still had a lot of questions. With a little help from the Chamber of Commerce, she found Business Counselor John Manderewicz with the Small Business and Technology Development Center, a no-fee based service of the University of North Carolina system.

SBTDC offers several tools, resources and information on how to begin a business. "We don't write people's business plans, but we review them and offer services of that nature," Manderewicz said.

Armed with those tools and a great support system of friends and family, she was ready to bring her business to life. She decided to start her first, of what she hopes will one day become a chain, restaurant in Grover.

She said that it was the family-oriented atmosphere of the town that attracted her to start their family-oriented business there first. According to Huskey, when they first walked into the vacant downtown store on Main Street it was dark and drab, desolate from years of neglect. But armed with a paintbrush, she and others infused new life onto its walls. Bright and vibrant colors make the old building new and contemporary. Simple artistic block patterns deck the walls instead of grand portraits, making the dining room in the old building, "elite" for its new customers - a name that stuck.

"Elite means different. I'm a very different person. My husband is very different...When I thought about 'Elite' I wanted a different atmosphere, different feel, different menu," she said.

Our mentality behind this is "go healthy," Huskey added. "We're going to cater to a lot of diabetics and those with high cholesterol or

high blood pressure."

She said that they want to offer healthy, live-longer food choices in addition to homestyle favorites, like casseroles and baked goods. The restaurant offers all-you-can-eat salad bars for \$7 a person.

The menu also includes, chicken wings, pastas, vegetarian lasagna, fish, hamburgers, pork chops, baked and fried chicken, homemade casseroles, and sandwiches. The café offers special plates of the day, kids meals, catering and rentals for private parties and birthdays.

On Saturday, June 28, 2008, Huskey, her family and staff celebrated the restaurant's Grand Opening. Mayor Robert Sides, Mayor Pro-Tem Jackie Bennett, Councilwoman Cynthia O'Brien and Town Clerk Tricia Willis were in attendance, along with four pastors from local churches to commemorate the occasion and bless the restaurant.

This (decor) looks great, Manderewicz said, standing inside the restaurant before the ribbon cutting on Saturday. He added that he was proud of all that Huskey has done. Mayor Sides said that they were glad to have the cafe downtown. He, along with Dara and Brian Huskey cut the ribbon together.

The small staff at the restaurant is composed of family members and non-related "family" members, Huskey said, each one instrumental to her dream. Her husband Brian, who works full-



EMILY WEAVER/HERALD

Dara Huskey and Brian Huskey (front) have opened a new restaurant in Grover - the Elite Cafe. Back row, left-right, Catherine Waller, Jessica LaPointe, Courtney Mitchell, Joreka Pierce, O'Brian Lee, Erica Shade, Joyce Smith, Karen Hawkins. Not pictured, Steven Burton, Neise Goode and Diane Lee.

time at Eaton Corporation, her sister Joreka, and her parents, Joyce Smith and Donald Bess have been wonderful help, she said. When asked how she made the decision to open a restaurant, Huskey responded, "I just prayed about it, trusted God and went for it."

The Huskeys are both graduates of Crest High School. Brian attended Gardner-Webb University and Dara attended Winston-Salem State University, where she received her Master's degree in Rehabilitation Counseling.

Elite Café is open Tuesday-Saturday 11 a.m.-8 p.m. and on Sunday 12-5 p.m.

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## LOCAL

### Ozmore earns Master's from Springfield College

David Ozmore of Kings Mountain has earned a Master of Science degree in human services from Springfield College, Mass. for studies completed in May 2008.

Founded in 1885, Springfield College is world renowned as the Birthplace of Basketball and for its guiding philosophy of humanities - education of the whole person - spirit, mind and body - for leadership service to others. Offering 40 undergraduate and 15 graduate major areas of study, the college educates leaders for the health sciences, human and social services, sports and movement studies, and the arts and sciences. Its doctoral programs are in physical education and physical therapy. The YMCA of the USA has designated Springfield College as a premier Leadership Center.

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