

LOCAL NEWS

Zumi's brings a bit of Nepal to Market Street

By *Miriam Hills-Cosgrove / Correspondent*
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The flying horse adorning one of the Tibetan prayer flags hanging above the entrance to Zumi's Espresso & Ice Cream shop on Market Street symbolizes, according to Buddhist tradition, "the accomplishment of positive works in a most suitable and instant way."

The proprietors of Zumi's, Zillie and Umesh Bhujju, could indeed make this their motto. Providing "instant" service to customers looking to cool down with ice cream or warm up with espresso-style coffee was, of course, their primary aim when they started the business a year ago on Valentine's Day. But the Bhujus were also interested in accomplishing other "positive works," including educating their Ipswich customers about the culture of Nepal, the pleasures of mountaineering, and the work of coffee growers.

"Many people have told us they like seeing more diversity in Ipswich," says Zillie, a first-generation Greek American. Umesh is a native of Nepal, where he worked as a guide for climbers of Mount Everest and other Himalayan peaks before coming to America in 1990.

The walls of Zumi's - a name formed by combining Zillie and Umesh - are lined with photographs of mountains and climbers. "We wanted to share with people our love of adventure," explains Umesh. Lately, he admits, he has had little time to spend outdoors due to his commitments to his business and to baby daughter Uma Pumori. But several customers, he notes, have expressed interest in starting a mountaineering club.

Umesh has found time to put together a slide show and lecture on the culture and mountains of Nepal, in which he describes his role as trek leader of the First New England Everest expedition in 1991. His first slide presentation at the Ipswich library last fall filled up quickly. For those who missed it, Umesh is offering the show again at 7:30 p.m. on Thursday, March 25 at the Ipswich River Wildlife Sanctuary.

Zillie and Umesh have also made it their mission to educate their coffee-drinking customers about Equal Exchange, a trade organization that offers small farmers in developing countries fair prices for their coffee beans and support for their communities. Fair trade gourmet coffee not only tastes good (as Zumi's regulars can testify) - buying it can help lift hardworking coffee growers and their families out of poverty.

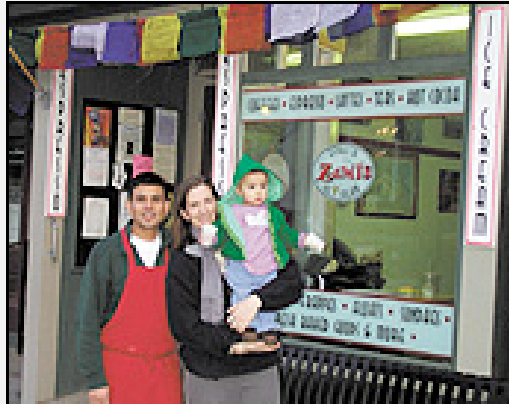
"A lot of our customers ask us about fair trade coffee," Umesh says. "When the shop is quiet I try to explain it to them." For people interested in learning more, Umesh plans to show of a film about the Equal Exchange program at the Ipswich library this spring.

Zillie, Umesh and Uma are putting down roots in the North Shore, but have not lost touch with Nepal. "We plan to display prayer flags throughout the year, and will get new ones from Umesh's family in Nepal when friends traveling there can bring them back with them," says Zillie.

The flags, known as "Lungta" among the Tibetans, add color to downtown Ipswich. But they are intended to be more than just decoration. When you see them blowing in the wind, it is said, your intention to pray and work for the welfare of others is rekindled. The wind, like the mind, carries the blessings throughout the countryside, and across the world.

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-- PHOTOGRAPHS --



Zillie and Umesh Bhujju, with 1-year-old Uma, stand in front of their shop with its Tibetan prayer flags and flying horse that symbolizes "positive works."
(Photo by Faith Tomei)