

Burnabynow

New Café to Honour Lost Son

By Janaya Fuller-Evans, Burnaby Now October 24, 2012

Joe's Table, a coffee shop with staff with differing abilities, is opening soon in Burnaby.

The café at 5021 Kingsway is being launched by Peter and Stephanie Chung in honour of their son Joseph, who passed away on Sept. 27.

Joseph, 32, died from complications after suffering a seizure while swimming, according to his obituary, which ran in The Vancouver Sun.

He had multiple disabilities, including autism and epilepsy, but was best known for the joy he brought others, the obituary stated.

"He is well-known for greeting strangers with, 'Hi, what's your name? My name is Joseph,'" it continued. "His knowing smile and disarming charm will live in our hearts and minds forever."

The Chung family has honoured their son in a variety of ways, including with a scholarship fund at Regent College and an endowment fund at Trinity Western University, and now, the café.

Peter is chair of The Eminata Group, which runs private career colleges such as CDI College, and the coffee shop will be located in the same building as the CDI Burnaby location.

Drew Lawrenson, vice-president general counsel for the group, appeared as a delegation at Monday night's council meeting.

He presented the concept for the café, which is being established as a socially minded coffee shop with staff with differing abilities.

The goal is to assist people with differing abilities by helping them [achieve financial independence](#), he said.

The coffee machines and types of food, including waffles, are being selected and designed to be easy for the employees to prepare and serve, Lawrenson added.

The management concept is based on "acceptance, social conscience and courage," he told council.

Mayor Derek Corrigan asked Lawrenson to give council's sympathies and condolences to the Chungs regarding their loss.

"I know how much they loved and respected Joe," he said, adding he had read about Joe before the meeting.

"Congratulations to the family for finding a very positive way for his memory to live on," he added.

Coun. Nick Volkow asked Lawrenson about the history of The Eminata Group, saying that city staff might not have passed the building permits if they knew the coffee shop was linked to the group, and asked whether or not Joe's Table would be a for-profit venture.

Lawrenson said he was not there to speak about the group's past but said the group has jumped through the necessary "hoops and hurdles" in regards to running its educational institutions.

The Chungs have not yet decided if the coffee house will be established as a corporation or as a nonprofit society, he said, as each option has different advantages and disadvantages, but that would be decided before Joe's Table opens.

But the point of the venture is an altruistic one - to give meaningful employment to people who often struggle to [find jobs](#) that fit their abilities, he stressed.

They are considering opening other coffee houses in other buildings where The Eminata Group has schools, as well, he added.

Coun. Paul McDonell asked how the coffee shop would be staffed.

The family is involved with many community groups because of Joe, and has a strong social network in the differing abilities community, according to Lawrenson, so hiring would initially be done through those connections in the community.

Giving people with differing abilities meaningful [employment](#) and treating them with respect is a very good cause, whether it is through a for-profit or nonprofit venture, Corrigan said.

"I hope it does [work](#)," he said. "I hope you are successful in achieving that."

Joe's Table is expected to open on Dec. 1, according to Lawrenson.