

Burnaby**now**

Joe's Table Officially Opens its Doors to Burnaby

By Stefania Seccia, Burnaby Now June 25, 2013



Possibilities: From left, Senator Yonah Martin, Peter Chung, Stephanie Chung and Mayor Derek Corrigan cut the ribbon at the official opening of Joe's Table.

Frances Cooper is "27-and-a-half" years old, she says, and she's in love with her first job.

"It's fun working here, meeting new people, making the drink orders for customers, meeting my coworkers, helping them out if they need any help," Cooper says, while wearing her green work apron. "I'm happy."

Cooper has a developmental disability and has been given her first opportunity to work at Joe's Table, along with her employment specialist, Amanda Kim, who works for posAbilities.

"It's been lots of fun," Kim said. "The staff here have been really supportive. (We can) ask any questions that we have. If we've forgotten, for example, how many pumps to put in the cup, how many scoops of powder to put in - everybody's been really welcoming. It's been great."

Cooper started working at Joe's on May 1 and said the job is everything that she hoped it would be.

"I'm always happy," Cooper said about her being at work. "I check for the milk, if the milk needs to be filled, the sugar ... because it needs to be done before anyone else uses it."

"It's a great job."

Joe's Table has been a labour of love in the memory of the late Joseph Chung, whose family has gone on to open the café and employ those with differing abilities.

Although it opened a few months ago, it celebrated its official grand opening on Monday, June 24. In attendance were Joseph's family, Senator Yonah Martin, and Burnaby Mayor Derek Corrigan, among others.

"It's a very special day in Burnaby history," Corrigan told the crowd of about 40 people outside Joe's Table. "A small coffee shop, with a big heart and a big dream - a coffee shop that is going to help to employ people in our community who face unique challenges, people who want to contribute to be able to ensure that they are active and useful members of our community. And Joe's Table is a place where that can happen."

Corrigan said it's been a dream come true for Joseph's parents, Peter and Stephanie Chung.

"It is recognition for all of the trials and tribulations that were based over their life and ensuring that their son Joe had a meaningful life who contributed to the society around them," he said.

The Joseph Chung Gallery, at the back of the café, displays art from those with developmental disabilities showcases the "passion, the emotion, the hearts and the souls of the young artists," Corrigan said.

"This is an opportunity to not only give employment to people who face unique challenges but also to be able to display some of the artwork that reflects their lives is really an important contribution to the City of Burnaby," he added.

Senator Yonah Martin was also in attendance as a friend of the family, and said the café will have a positive impact on the community.

"Joe's Table was originally intended for their late son, Joseph, and others with disabilities to work without being pre-judged as persons with disabilities, but as hard-working and productive citizens," she said. "I also hear (Joseph's) voice, 'Hi, how are you? My name is Joseph. What is your name?' Imagine that greeting as you enter a coffee shop and a bright smile to start your day."

Joseph's catchphrase can be read on the walls of the café, as he was meant to be a greeter when it opened.

"Though Joseph left us too soon, the dream of Joe's Table has been realized through his loving parents and the incredible labour of love that many have participated in," she said. "Joe's Table will now employ people with disabilities in a warm, welcoming atmosphere for workers and patrons."

Joseph's brother, Sam Chung, also spoke to the crowd protected from the pouring rain, and thanked everyone for their support.

"My brother was a year and a half older than me," he said. "My fondest memory of my brother was his smile, his laughter, his ability to show me love in a very special way."

Sam said he hopes the café will help people support those with different abilities.

"I think it's going to be an amazing thing for this city, for this community, just for all of the different businesses around here ... in which everyone can come, not only to share coffee, share a meal and to be able to talk to one another, but it is a place for people like Joe with certain disabilities and looked upon a certain way in society," he said. "(It's a place) for people to really change their outlook."

The Eminata Group, which Peter Chung is chair of, presented a \$250,000 cheque to Joe's Table Society at the grand opening, as a donation.

The café is at 5021 Kingsway Ave., part of the CDI Burnaby location, which is a private career college run by the Eminata Group.

PosAbilities was established in 1998 and has since provided support for those with different disabilities. For more information, visit www.posabilities.ca.