

# UP FRONT



## NEIGHBORHOOD STORIES

By Bette McDevitt

### Beechview Coming Up!

In less than one hour, I met five remarkable people in Beechview: three in one place, and two in another.

The Crested Duck, a butcher shop on Broadway, was my first stop. It was easy to find, because the shopping district is small. The potential recovery of the area drew me there. I come from a small town, New Castle, where the downtown area has lost its vitality as well. I am always looking for success stories that might be transferable.

In Beechview, there have been numerous foreclosures in recent years due to the failure of an owner to upgrade his properties. Longtime Beechview resident Tim Coyne explained

#### Kevin Costa in the Crested Duck drying room.

Photo by Bette McDevitt.



Crested Duck storefront.

Photo by Michelle Caparoula.

that the delinquent owner also failed to make payment on the loans. As a result, four properties, with more to come, have reverted to the Urban Redevelopment Authority, which is trying to make the best of a bad situation. "I'd just like to see the street as it was ten years ago," said Tim. "We had cops on the beat who knew everyone and kept it safe. Hopefully, it will get better."

Kevin Costa, owner of the Crested Duck, is determined to make that happen. He was one of the first to open a business among the

shuttered shops and is thrilled to be there. "We looked at many places, and this is perfect. I love the cobblestone street, and being right on the trolley line. We needed a half decent basement for the drying room, and there was enough room for a deli, which we hadn't planned on."

The drying room is key; this young butcher is engaged in the business of charcuterie—curing and preserving meat. Not the usual meats, mind you, but farm-raised meats including elk, bison, venison, duck, goose, rabbit, goat, and more. (The shop's name reflects its passion and mission: the crested duck is one of 200 endangered foods listed on the Slow Food list.) Kevin creates galantines, patés, terrines, roulades, and rillettes as well as accompanying jellies, jams, and relishes. And he is self taught.

Kevin worked in restaurants before taking on this craft, but only saw cured meat from a distance. To learn butchering he did what anyone would. He purchased, from a farm, one half of an elk. With his father and brother, he laid the creature on his brother's kitchen table, and with the aid of a textbook, butchered it. He is now entering his third



#### Brew on Broadway.

Photo by Michelle Caparoula.



year of business, with a weekend location at Pittsburgh Public Market in the Strip District.

In the deli half of his shop—the other part is the kitchen—portraits of a Scottish Highlander bull and black Berkshire pigs running through tall grass hang on the wall. “These animals belong to my farmers,” Kevin explained. Those farmers are part of a carefully nurtured network of providers in the region.

It was in the deli, amongst the aromas of spices, garlic, bread, and coffee, that I met the other two people. Christina Deasy, waiting for her sandwich to be assembled from an irresistible display of meats and cheeses, confessed that she could hardly wait to taste her order, although it was only mid-morning. Christina introduced me to her friend, Maurice Makay, a Beechview resident who plans to launch a grocery delivery business for people who want organic and sustainable

foods but do not have time or are unable to do their own shopping.

Christina, who lives in West Homestead, has a business with three other women: an organic cloth diaper service called Changin’ Time. The women support and promote other businesses that abide by sustainable, organic, local, ethical practices and products, through a blog called [SOLEforthesoul.wordpress.com](http://SOLEforthesoul.wordpress.com), maintained by one of the four, Michelle Caparoula. I had met three entrepreneurs in 20 minutes.

When I dropped in on Brew on Broadway a few doors down, people were enjoying freshly brewed coffee at small tables, in a welcoming atmosphere with original art work on the walls, reading material, comfortable chairs that invite customers to linger, and lush potted plants. “My plants were not happy at home, and I brought them here, where they

are much happier,” said Jack Folczer, a regular customer who has his own spot at the counter, with his coffee and his laptop.

“You have no idea how happy I am to have this place. I’ve met so many wonderful people here. I didn’t realize how many great people were here in Beechview.” Jack lives only a block away, “rolls out of bed, and lands here,” as he put it. “I’ve done a lot of homework here. I just graduated from college last week.”

Brew on Broadway is modeled after the Cannon Coffee café, located in Brookline, the topic of an earlier column. Both are projects of Renew Pittsburgh, a non-profit agency dedicated to the renewal of Pittsburgh neighborhoods. André Costello, an employee of the shared projects, put it this way: “Our goal is to provide places for people to go, have good conversation, and to encourage collaboration.”

It would seem from the happy customers that the coffee shop’s mission is being fulfilled, perhaps beyond their expectations. “Being here has made me interested in working for a nonprofit,” said Jack Folczer. “The mission of what they do is meaningful, and I would be much happier in this kind of work than in the corporate world where I worked before.” ☀

For more information on the businesses mentioned, visit [www.crestedduck.com](http://www.crestedduck.com); [www.changintime.com](http://www.changintime.com); and [facebook.com/brewonbroadway](http://facebook.com/brewonbroadway).

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