

Fairport-East Rochester Post

Red Bird Market celebrates its third birthday in Fairport

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Fairport, N.Y. — People like to taste things, explains Red Bird Market owner Julie Stolze. The independent grocery, known for its fresh-ground peanut butter — in flavors like chocolate, cinnamon, cappucino and butterscotch — and friendly service is celebrating its third birthday this month.

Red Bird offers a range of goods from the finest local vendors from Arbor Hill wine jelly to the Ravioli Shop, The Pie Lady, based in Fairport; The Pierogi Guy from East Rochester and Flour City Pasta. Conveniently located adjacent to the Fairport Farmers Market on Saturdays, many sell their goods there during the week.

“I think we really live in an area with a lot of great local foods,” said Stolze. “But also, the people here are appreciative of that and they’ll go out of their way to support them.”

The short history of the store starts in 2008. Stolze, 53, previously worked as a buyer and production scheduler for Hewlett-Packard and later spent 20 years as a Mary Kay consultant. While she enjoyed working in business, the idea to open a grocery store stemmed from a deeper desire to do something useful.

She and her husband have lived in the village of Fairport for two decades, but with their three children grown, the possibility of making this dream a reality seemed worth a try. So the couple put together a survey and distributed it among village residents to see how many would shop at a local market. The response was overwhelmingly in favor.

“All the pieces just kind of fell together,” said Stolze.

But not too easily. For the next 10 months, they searched for a location in the village. And although the business was courted by Victor, Pittsford and even the mayor of Holley, their eyes turned toward the Village Landing, where foot traffic from the library would bring more customers. The only vacant space was once occupied by Tops, and this was too big.

Finally, a vacancy at 103 Fairport Village Landing opened up, and they jumped at the chance. Since then, the payoff has been remarkable.

“We’re probably twice as busy as we were when we started,” said Stolze.

Many customers now make a stop at Red Bird as part of their daily rounds, perhaps to catch the red bird mascot waving or dancing outside.

Inside, the sweet nutty smell of dried snacks and peanut butter is hard to resist. With a soothing Pandora radio station in the background, families can browse for other novelty items besides groceries, including games like Bananagrams.

With a growing customer base, Stolze says the shop is a “clean and bright” environment in the midst of a village already buzzing with energy. This is a testament to the quality of local goods in the Rochester area and beyond.

“I think we have the best of every world,” she said.

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