

DORCHESTER

On the avenue, new cafe makes room for work of local artists

July 6, 2008

Karen Henry-Garrett, a Le Cordon Bleu-trained chef, had dreamed of opening a cafe since moving to Dorchester from London 2 1/2 years ago. In May, her dream came true, and she hopes her new place, the Dot2Dot Café at 1739 Dorchester Ave., will be more than a place to get pancakes, quiche, and coffee. She wants it to be a spot where neighbors connect while appreciating the work of local artists, including those from the newly opened Clay Station Sculpture Studio up the street.

"There's no other coffee place here, no other breakfast place," Henry-Garrett said. "There was definitely a need."

Last Saturday, about 50 neighbors and city activists gathered as Mayor Thomas M. Menino cut ribbons for the cafe and the clay studio. "This just shows entrepreneurship is alive and well in Boston," Menino said.

Once a beauty supply shop, Clay Station now houses pottery wheels, a glazing station, and exhibition space. The nonprofit Dorchester Community Center for the Visual Arts, or Dot Art, opened the studio Jan. 1. Dorchester residents can pay to take pottery classes; some are even free.

Executive director Leslie MacWeeney said Henry-Garrett asked her last fall whether Dot Art artists would display their work at the cafe.

"We're very neighborhoody in Dorchester," MacWeeney said, and as proof, about 25 Clay Station artists, ages 5 to 13, spent five months creating a mosaic of grapes, pizza, and other food items that hangs outside the cafe.

Margaret Lamb, a 64-year-old neighbor, is among those who welcome the new businesses.

"I've been here since 1986 and there's never been a lot of arts in Dorchester," she said.

Before the ribbon cutting, Hannah Butler, an 11-year-old from Dorchester, was eager to see the mosaic she had contributed to. "It's cool because it's kids who made it."

KATE AUGUSTO ■