



BACK TO SCHOOL @
Dewey's Copper Café



BY LESLIE KLIPSCH

With kids throughout the Quad-Cities back in school this month, I have been in the mood for an academic setting. But besides going back to the classroom, where does one go to satisfy their bookish cravings? The answer, of course, is to the library. Even better? A library that offers coffee, pastries and butternut squash soup right on premises.

Dewey's Copper Café, which is housed within the Moline Public Library and was named with a nod to the Dewey Decimal System and the copper (Cu) that accents the

facility, opened in 2006 and has been happily serving patrons of the library ever since.

"In the library setting, you're always dealing with nice people. You really never deal with people who have an unpleasant attitude," says 21-year-old college senior Atef Kotob, who managed the café this summer for his mother, Salma Arabi, who owns the shop. Ms. Arabi rents the bright, charming space from the city of Moline and in doing so is fulfilling a life-long dream of owning a business.

After nearly a decade in business, the

café is thriving. On a recent late afternoon visit, I observed a family of four, each thumbing through a book and nibbling on a cookie; a college-age student eating lunch; a group of three 11-year-olds chatting quietly while sipping on bottles of fruit-flavored IZZY; and a steady stream of adults holding a book in one hand and a refreshment in the other.

As often happens in mom-and-pop shops and in the world of food service, communities form and develop over time. "I love the people," said Mr. Kotob, who works in a research lab at The University of Illinois throughout the academic year.

"Just this morning no less than five customers have come in who know my name, know where I'm at in school, and know what my next step is. It's like I have my own cheering squad — all because of this place," he grins appreciatively.

This fall, Ms. Arabi will be back behind the counter serving fresh coffee and making spectacular sandwiches. Back in Champaign,

Photos by Leslie Klipsch



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Mr. Kotob will resume work on his degree in mechanical engineering. He'll study at the university library where he will find all the trappings of academia, "but," he says wistfully, "no café."

Family favorites

The menu at Dewey's Copper Café was

chip cookies as delicious and her homemade muffins as spectacular. Ms. Johnson bakes at the café before heading just steps away to her post as librarian.

My favorites

I'm a bit picky about my coffee and am thrilled to report that the coffee at Dewey's



Leslie Klipsch
Atef Kotob, who
managed the cafe
this summer for
owner Salma Arabi
(also his mother).

inspired by the offerings at Dewey's Café at the Bettendorf Public Library (another delightful Q-C spot). However, the café in Moline offers a Mediterranean twist. "I love our hummus," Mr. Kotob raves, explaining that the homemade hummus available at Dewey's Copper Café is a riff on the hummus that one might find in Syria, which, though he was born in the United States, is where his family is originally from. He also enjoys the baked goods that librarian Maribel Johnson labors over during early mornings at the café. He describes her toffee chocolate

Copper Café passes the test: It's dark and robust. The cappuccino I enjoyed recently was nice and foamy with a fresh espresso aroma and flavor. And I agree with Mr. Kotob: the pita and hummus is fantastic. Admittedly, I would also gobble up the Greek salad or gourmet veggie sandwich on herb focaccia any day of the week. All this, plus a pleasant atmosphere, freshly baked sweets available daily, and access to thousands of books just around the corner make Dewey's Copper Café a terrific place to spend a few hours.



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