

No average joe

Upper Arlington High's coffee shop is a real business eye-opener

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Upper Arlington High School students and teachers can now grab a cup of Golden Bear brew in the school's own coffee shop. The **UA Rise** Cafe, which opened yesterday in a concession stand in the East Cafeteria, might be the only such student-operated, totally donor-funded coffee shop in the state, and it's one of a few in the country, teacher Karen D'Eramo said.

The cafe is open to students and staff from 7:30 to 8 a.m. and from 10:30 a.m. to 12:40 p.m. Teachers can also get coffee, and delivery, from 12:40 to 1 p.m. Junior Hillary Stemkowski, 16, was eager to see the cafe open.

"I've always wanted to work in a coffee shop, and this looked like a really good thing to be involved in," she said. "Getting real-life experience will be the best part and opening a business.

"It's what I want to do when I get out of college. I want to open a bakery like (in the TV show) Ace of Cakes. And, of course, it's a really good cup of coffee, and I love coffee."

The students helped map out the cafe's path, from the business plan to the logo, D'Eramo said.

She and fellow teacher Steve Colahan oversee the 14 students who run the cafe. The teens are in a program for students who might have barriers to academic success, D'Eramo said.

"This is a better way to involve them in the school community so they're proud of what happens here," she said.

Customers can choose a small, freshly brewed coffee or espresso for \$1.60 or a frozen white mocha for \$4.05. Hot chocolate, iced tea, hot tea and chai (a spiced milk tea) are also served.

The shop's origin was modest.

"It grew from an idea that we could put a coffeepot into a classroom and serve iced coffee, put some ice in a cooler, have some syrups and milk and call it a day," D'Eramo said.

"Over the summer and fall, as we did more research, we realized that wouldn't work, that wouldn't make good coffee drinks, and we have a lot of competition." Doing it right meant it grew into a \$30,000 operation, she said.

"The sticker shock was something we weren't prepared for," Colahan said. "But we were excited to hit our fundraising goal."

Donors include the district's Innovation Council, Cameron Mitchell Restaurants, the Upper Arlington Rotary, Huffman's Market, the student council, the high school's Student Foundation, Upper Arlington Career Development and staff members, she said. Money also was raised from mug sales.

Last week, Armando Escobar trained students in the ways of the Crimson Cup, a Columbus company that supplies coffee to 300 independently owned coffee shops in 30 states and Guam. "It's surprisingly easy to make," said sophomore Tony Scaperoth, 16.

"The key is being efficient ... and paying attention," Escobar told the students. "It's important to give the paying customer whatever it is they're paying for."

Freshman Clay Guzik, 15, said the students expect plenty of business.

"Whenever I wear my (cafe) shirt, 10 kids ask me about it," he said. The cafe staff will host a community open house from 5 to 7 p.m. Tuesday.