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2009 TAMPA BAY BUCCANEERS



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St. Petersburg Times

Consciousness Blossoms in Palm Harbor serves vegetarian fare with message of peace

By Julie Church, Times Correspondent
In Print: Tuesday, September 29, 2009

Drishti Pliske of Miami, left, and Kamila Hozlarova of Hudson serve spinach-artichoke soup to James Hughes of Oldsmar, Bonnie Starr of Largo and Betsie Hughes of Oldsmar, at lower right, during a 10th anniversary celebration dinner Sunday at Consciousness Blossoms, a vegetarian restaurant in Palm Harbor that shares a message of peace.



[DOUGLAS R. CLIFFORD | Times]

PALM HARBOR

Nestled in a strip plaza off bustling Tampa Road is a very different type of restaurant. Not only does it feature fresh vegetarian cuisine, but its owner and staff are working to promote peace and inspire the community, one serving at a time.

Consciousness Blossoms opened 10 years ago this month and in these tough economic times, when many larger restaurants are closing their doors, regular customers still flock to this eatery as much for the people who run it as for the food itself.

"It's very serene and peaceful here," said Judith Ann Pattison, 61, at a dinner honoring loyal customers and local volunteers at the restaurant Sunday.

Pattison and her husband, Peter, 62, travel from south Clearwater sometimes as often as three times a week to enjoy breakfast or lunch at Consciousness Blossoms.

"I just like the fact that the servers are beautiful people and they make you feel like family," Judith Ann Pattison said.

Owner Tilvila Hurwit, 50, knew nothing about running a restaurant when she opened Consciousness Blossoms in 1999, but she did know she wanted it to be an oasis for the body and soul.

"I wanted it to be a place for peace and inspiration," Hurwit said. "I also wanted it to have really good food."

The restaurant is inspired by the late Indian spiritual teacher Sri Chinmoy, whose portrait hangs on the wall and whose music plays in the background.

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The Pattisons like the selection of different Chinmoy quotes printed on business cards displayed on each table.

"We like to shuffle the cards and then pick one and it's our message for the day," Peter Pattison said.

The five women who work at the restaurant participate annually in the World Harmony Run, an event started by Chinmoy in 1987. The global torch relay and other community events celebrate peace and advocate for a more harmonious world.

They decided to take the effort one step further this year by honoring three local volunteers with the "Torch Bearer" awards handed out Sunday.

"We wanted to help celebrate the restaurant by celebrating the community members who have been so selfless in helping others," Hurwit said.

One of the awards was given to Betsie Hughes, 17, an East Lake High School student who had a stroke before birth and walks with a limp. But she does not let her disability get in the way of helping others.

She volunteers for several agencies in the community including the Red Cross, Countryside Library and a group at her school called the Invisible Children's Club.

"One of the greatest gifts you can receive, besides love, is the ability to help others," she said. "We all have that ability."

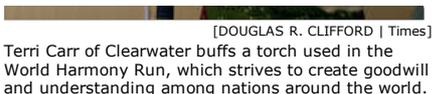
Pat Hayes, 71, of Palm Harbor and Meredith Chisholm, 70, of Clearwater also were honored for their work in helping survivors of domestic violence through the Haven of RCS in Clearwater.

Hays spent 20 years working in human services. When she retired, she missed helping others.

"I wanted to volunteer in a group that involved help and support," she said.

Hurwit said she and her staff plan to continue saluting community helpers by hosting the Torch Bearer Awards every year.

She would like to hear other stories of unsung heroes and urges people to contact the restaurant if they know someone deserving of an award by calling (727) 725-0013.



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IF YOU GO

Consciousness Blossoms

Where: 3390 Tampa Road, Palm Harbor.

Phone: (727) 789-1931.

Hours: 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. Tuesday through Sunday; 5 to 8 p.m. Friday dinner; closed Mondays.

Sri Chinmoy

Sri Chinmoy, the late Indian spiritual teacher, is the inspiration behind the restaurant, according to owner Tilvila Hurwit. For information, visit www.srichinmoy.org. Here are some Chinmoy aphorisms that are featured on cards on tables:

- A single thought of peace*
- Can make*
- A world of difference*
- Not intention*
- But Action*
- Is what we need*
- Do not look around*
- Look within*
- To find your own divinity*

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i c clearly from pinellas park

Sep 29th, 2009 4:34 pm

Great place to eat. Prices are good and the people there are very nice.

john from Clamwater

Sep 29th, 2009 11:52 am

Now we know where all the libs like to eat.

Ruth from San Francisco, Ca

Sep 29th, 2009 6:01 am

This is exactly how myself & boyfriend felt when my brother ,who lives in Clearwater, took us for a beautifully prepared brunch. Thus is a wonderful restaurant to experience!



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