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## **Sip n' Suds Shines on State Street**

*A MicroBiz graduate and Microloan recipient, business owner  
builds business by addressing community needs*

**HUDSON, NY** – Selha Graham Cora, proprietor of The Laundress at Sip n' Suds at 453 State St. in Hudson is shaping her business plan by identifying needs in her community and fulfilling them.

Flexibility and listening to the people she serves has helped Cora to define four separate businesses under one roof, all based on need. Cora and her family have leased Sip n' Suds Laundromat from the Sherman family since 2008, leaving her corporate job to enjoy the flexibility of home-schooling her children and having help in the family-run business. In addition to running the only self-serve laundry within walking distance for city residents, Cora has gradually added other services such as washing and folding laundry available for pickup and delivery. She recently added a “Swash” machine, which neutralizes, deodorizes and steams clothes in one hour without the use of harsh dry cleaning chemicals.

In the back of the laundry in a separate room with Wi-Fi, Cora has three tables, a workspace and a couch available for customers who are waiting for their laundry. She serves coffee, tea and baked goods and will soon be adding sandwiches and other light fare. On the two floors above the business, Cora has turned two former apartments into room rentals based on inquiries from local residents and those from out of town. She formerly advertised the rooms on the website

AirBnB, but now has all eight units rented on either a short-term or long-term basis. “There is a need for this and it has to be flexible enough to accommodate people who may be in limbo or in flux,” she said of the decision to change the housing she offers. Residents include local people as well as those in the area for internships at Bard or short-term jobs with Etsy or Modern Farmer, said Cora. “It provides an affordable housing alternative. It feels like a community.”

After local businesses Kaz and L & B closed, Cora lost a vast majority of her regular laundry customers and was looking for an alternative revenue stream. A local need for U-Haul trucks and vans was brought to her attention and she began offering rental services in 2012. “God bless the antiquers,” she said with a laugh, noting her trucks are rented on a regular basis. She currently keeps a 10-foot truck and a cargo van in an adjacent parking area and the remainder of five trucks available for use parked at the former L & B lot at 99 South Third St. She manages the U-Haul rentals on her computer at Sip n’ Suds and has a pulse on the community. “Just this week two people from California, one from Vermont and a bunch of New Yorkers moved to Columbia County,” she said. All the new residents used her U-Haul service to make the move. “I love meeting people, finding out what’s going on in Hudson,” said Cora. “This business allows me to do that.”

The high demand for Wi-Fi in the county also draws people to her location, she said. An Ancramdale resident who had no access to the Internet recently spent eight hours at Sip n’ Suds, working on his laptop in the laundry’s café. Increased Broadband availability and affordable housing are two areas of need being addressed by the Columbia Economic Development Corporation (CEDC). Having the café and Wi-Fi available for customers is a service Cora sees as important. “People can either work on their laptops in the café or run errands and leverage their time,” she said.

“Selha has a unique ability to identify and successfully address needs of people in the community,” said CEDC Executive Director Ken Flood. Cora took the CEDC’s annual MicroBusiness Seminar and has a microloan from the agency to improve her business. While more renovations of Sip n’ Suds are planned, Cora was able to fix five out of nine commercial

dryers and 11 of 16 washers with some of the funding. She plans to paint and purchase more items for the café in the coming weeks.

Cora, who is the mother of six children, has been the sole proprietor of her businesses since 2011 and works six days a week. The Churchtown resident moved to the county from Brooklyn in 1994 when she was a teenager and loves the rural nature and small city life. Winter hours for Sip n' Suds are 9 am to 7 pm weekdays (except Tuesday) and 8:30 am to 8 pm on weekends. They can be reached at 518 828.3452.

**Columbia Economic Development Corporation (CEDC), the lead economic development organization for Columbia County, is committed to strengthening the county's tax base through economic development and job creation while maintaining the quality of life desired by the people who live and work here. For more information about the programs and services of CEDC, please visit our website at [www.columbiaedc.com](http://www.columbiaedc.com) or call us at 518 828.4718.**

#### PHOTOS:





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