



Choose Columbia

Columbia Economic Development Corporation

for business. for life.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: March 3, 2015

CONTACT: Carol Wilber
518 828.4718

The Spencertown Store

Couple return home to buy local business

Walking into the Spencertown Country Store on a cold winter morning, patrons are greeted by the tantalizing aroma of bacon and eggs and fresh coffee. Columbia County natives and new storeowners Steve and Ann Pinto bustle about the store, waiting on customers stopping in for a newspaper and a coffee or an egg sandwich to go. Baker Delsia Hilton puts together a special order chicken potpie for a customer, and then gets ready to whip up one of her signature homemade desserts.

The Pintos took over the Spencertown Country Store on October 1, 2014, buying the business from Tom, Donna and Josh Carlucci, who operated it for several years. A longtime anchor along Route 203 in the tiny hamlet of Spencertown, the store offers groceries and sundries, Boar's Head deli cold cuts, prepared foods, sandwiches, homemade soups, fresh eggs, desserts and beverages. The store will eventually sell beer, according to Steve Pinto.

The decision to buy the store was spur of the moment, according to Steve Pinto. The couple had been living in Rouse's Point in northern New York State since 2001 where Steve worked for Champlain Telephone Company. The couple previously worked at the former Taconic Telephone Corp., now FairPoint Communications. Ann was operator services supervisor for years until she left in 1989 when the couple had their first child. Steve worked at Taconic Telephone Corp. from 1979 until 1997 when he left for Champlain. The couple kept their home in Spencertown and Ann lived there until their last two children graduated from Chatham High School, eventually joining Steve in Rouse's Point. Steve said he stopped in at the Spencertown Country Store last fall for a cup of coffee and was approached by Josh Carlucci who said the store was for sale. With continued major changes in the

telecommunications industry a factor, Steve decided to retire from Champlain and take over the reins of his hometown country store.

“We wanted to come home,” said Steve. While neither of them had experience in running a store, the couple said the Carlucci family helped extensively with the transition and their customers have been very supportive. “I’ve worked with wholesalers and vendors all of my life in the phone business and this is the same thing, just a different product,” said Steve Pinto. “It’s taking care of customers. Customers are customers.”

There was just one problem: the couple knew a lot about customer service, but not a lot about running a business. In November 2014, Ann called Small Business Development Specialist Martha Lane at Columbia Economic Development Corporation and enrolled in the popular eight-week MicroBusiness Program.

Meeting weekly with roughly a dozen others gave Ann Pinto opportunities to exchange ideas and discuss problems with like-minded business owners. “It was so helpful to actually hear people who have started businesses telling about mistakes they made, pitfalls they experienced and their success stories,” said Ann.

The MicroBusiness sessions cover a wide range of topics, all taught by a local professional in that field. Bookkeeping basics, marketing, and writing a business plan were particularly memorable. “The classes were intensive and really eye-opening,” said Ann. “I was impressed with how accommodating and knowledgeable the instructors were.”

The couple found out about the CEDC MicroBusiness Seminar Series from Marketing Director and Spencertown resident Carol Wilber, who had stopped in for coffee one morning. “I never knew it was there,” said Steve Pinto who was impressed with all of the “extras” that came with taking the classes. Upon completion of the MicroBusiness seminar series, Ann received her “Micro MBA,” which qualified her for one-on-one technical assistance from an area business consultant. “The whole experience has helped build my confidence as I begin to put what I’ve learned into practice,” stated Ann.

While much of the food available at the store is for take-out, there are several tables available for patrons to sit down and get something to eat. The new owners plan to reconfigure the tables this spring.

‘We want to provide a place for everyone in the community,’ said Ann. ‘It’s a place to sit and have a cup of coffee, to see your neighbors.’ There are currently three small tables with seating for 12 and a long table with benches to accommodate a bigger crowd.

The couple plans to build up the grocery offerings which now include staples like cereal, sugar, canned goods, chips, soda, milk, garbage bags, charcoal and other items. ‘We can’t compete with a big grocery store but we can save you a trip into town,’ said Steve Pinto of the plan to expand the grocery section. The store is a convenient stop not only for locals but those traveling the busy road to Catamount and Bousquet ski areas, Steepletop, Fox Hill, the Spencertown Academy or Tanglewood. Freshly ground coffee from Tierra Farms is available as well as fresh local eggs. Baker Delsia Hilton stayed on with the Pintos and specializes in pastries, pies, cakes and muffins. Hilton also creates hot lunches and take-out foods like the chicken potpie, chili and lasagna.

‘My participation in the MicroBusiness program will be invaluable in the months and years ahead as we make changes and plan for growth,’ added Ann. ‘This was our chance to come home and we couldn’t be happier.’

The Spencertown Country Store is open from 7 a.m. to 5 p.m. Tuesdays through Saturdays and from 7 a.m. to 3 p.m. on Sundays, closed on Mondays. The store will be open seven days a week during the summer.

The Columbia Economic Development Corporation (CEDC), the leading economic development organization in Columbia County, is committed to strengthening the county’s tax base through economic development and job creation while maintaining the quality of life so desired by the people who live and work here. For more information about CEDC’s MicroBusiness program please contact Business Development Specialist Martha Lane at 518 828 4718.

PHOTOS:



Baker Delsia Hilton

###