

Cupcakes Sustain Teen Moms

Tuesday, June 16, 2009



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With the help of a \$100,000 grant from Women United in Philanthropy, a Teaneck program for pregnant teens and teenage moms has opened a bakery that will both raise money for the organization and provide job training for the girls.



staff photos by kevin r. wexler

Zoe's Place has been providing child care, mentoring and support groups for teenagers since it was founded in 2003. The funds from Women United, a group of Bergen County women who pool their donations to make an annual grant to charities that help women escape poverty, allowed the organization to open Zoe's Cupcake Café on Chestnut Avenue in Teaneck.

"The café is a way to create sustainable funding for Zoe's Place while also providing job training," said Jane Fiedler, executive director of the café program and a co-founder of Zoe's Place. "But we want to provide a different kind of training than kids normally get. The biggest part of the focus will be training them in customer service."

The bakery has opened with professional staff, but Fiedler said she hopes to hire some of the program's teenage clients within the next few weeks. "The state has a program through the Department of Labor that will subsidize some of the costs so we will be able to hire one of the girls full time," she said. "That will allow us to hire some more of them for part-time jobs."

How many of the girls the bakery can hire, Fiedler added, "depends on how many cupcakes we sell. The more money we make, the more girls we'll be able to hire. By the end of the year we hope to have six to eight."



Volunteer Talya Kellen, above, and Miriam Bloom, left, director of operations of Zoe's Cupcake Cafe, arranging displays. A \$100,000 grant helped set up the bakery.