



Heartwarming Honeycomb

By Doug White

There is a restaurant in downtown Arkadelphia where, Monday through Friday, customers not only get their stomachs filled, but their hearts as well. Sound farfetched? Perhaps. But it is a reality for those of us who have discovered the Honeycomb.

The Honeycomb Restaurant started in 1995 and has developed quite a reputation for excellent food, to be sure. The vaunted Southern Living magazine has written about the Honeycomb no less than three times. It is a consistent award winner here in Arkansas for its breakfast and lunch fare.



Waitresses Kaitlyn, left, and Kristy, right, visit with Doug White.

On a recent visit for lunch, our group tried “one of everything.” The appetizer sampler featuring fried green beans didn’t last long. Nor did the cheese soup, homemade from scratch (as are all the menu items) with a slice of freshly baked bread. The soup is offered in cup size or as an entrée in a bread bowl.

Then came the entrees and the feasting commenced. The Tropical Salad arrived and literally looked like a photo from a food magazine. It was perfect – fresh spring mix greens with concord grapes, shaved almonds and a sweet mango dressing. It was easy to see why the salads here are such crowd favorites.

There was plenty to eat for the carnivores, lest you think this was merely a soup and salad

place. The bowl of chili (one of the daily specials) was rich and hearty and hit the spot on a cold, wintry day. We were fortunate to get the last piece of sausage quiche, another popular menu item. (The quiche is made fresh daily, and choices vary from traditional Lorraine to mushroom to cheese.) The quiche’s flaky crust was outdone only by the velvety smooth eggs and herbs.

Other entrees include lightly seasoned grilled chicken breast, an assortment of vegetables, hamburgers and cheeseburgers, French fries, fried sweet potatoes, and chicken tenders that are not just for kids. All served fresh and hot; all were delicious.

Our servers, Kristy and Kaitlyn, tidied our table before bringing our desserts: lemon meringue pie and, just for giggles (and lots of chocolate) their world-famous Ding Dong Cake. Suffice to say both desserts were sinfully good, and were devoured within seconds.

A word about Kristy and Kaitlyn and the reason the Honeycomb is such a special place. Each of these ladies is developmentally disabled, yet both integrate seamlessly into the restaurant. In fact, on any given day, the Honeycomb has between 14 and 19 men and women like Kristy and Kaitlyn who prep, bake, cook, serve and clean. It is their job, and they do it with a love and dedication that is noticeable the minute you step inside this miracle of a restaurant.

“Our goal is to take developmentally challenged people, give them jobs and help them attain a level of independence,” said Todd Lucas, general manager of the Honeycomb and nephew of its brainchild, Jane Lucas, executive director for Group Living Inc., a private, non-profit organization providing community services to people with developmental disabilities.



Group Living was formed in 1973 in Arkadelphia and has grown over the years to include not only the Honeycomb Restaurant, but the Beehive Store resale shop, housecleaning services and residential living.

The entire restaurant is spotless, with cleanliness a major focal point both in the dining room and in the kitchen. As we toured the kitchen, we watched a Group Living client as he diligently kneaded dough for the fresh baked bread.

Having experienced the great food and wonderful staff, we asked Lucas why isn’t this combination being duplicated in other cities and towns. “Good question,” said Lucas as he sat with us during the busy lunch hour. “We know this type of business is unique, but it can work. We hope we can be a shining example for others.”

Mark Twain wrote, “Kindness is a language which the deaf can hear and the blind can see.” At the Honeycomb, they speak and serve kindness. •



The Honeycomb is located at 715 Main St. in Arkadelphia, and is open Monday through Friday from 7 a.m. to 2 p.m. Check out the website and more information about Group Living at www.honeycombrestaurant.com.

Do you have a restaurant to recommend for Doug? Contact him at doug.white@aec.com.