

# The Daily Item

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## Entrepreneurs betting on success in downtown Lynn

By **Jill Casey**

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**LYNN** - Despite the risks, owning a small business is still one of the most sought after slices of the American dream, and why three entrepreneurs have laid down thousands of dollars and sweat equity for a taste of that dream right in Central Square.

With two of them already open for business, and the other anticipating a late summer opening, this trio of business owners is closely watching the downtown flower with urban lofts and storefront improvement projects.

They were sold on the idea that Lynn is the next big real estate hot spot, but recognize that this downtown resurgence can take years to move from concept to reality.

This is why neither of them expect to profit in the first few years by selling ice cream, Russian books or funky sandwiches. All the hassles and risks are second to the rewards of being your own boss and becoming an early piece of the community's redevelopment, they say.

"I got sick of working in a cube and staring at a computer all day," said Gulu Gulu Café owner Steve Feldman, about why he left a lucrative job in the software industry to open up a European style café in Lynn. "I guess it can be viewed as a risky venture, but at the same time, this is exactly what I want to do."

Feldman said that he and his wife Marie had talked about opening a café for years and recreating the cafes they frequented while living in Prague. After moving into Boston Machine Lofts downtown, the atmosphere of which he likens to a "Seinfeld" episode, he put together a business plan of his vision.

His loft neighbors served as a source of his inspiration; he envisions the restaurant becoming a regular stop for the young professionals snatching up real estate here.

Feldman's MBA coupled with his experience in the restaurant industry were all factors that worked to his advantage when seeking a lease and a loan, but contends that none of it was easy. His financial status was also a stumbling block.

"I can't say that the money was there," said Feldman, which is why he remortgaged his loft and sought out loans with the help of the Economic Development and Industrial Corporation, which works to promote business in the city.

The road to the ribbon cutting was rigorous, and came with plenty of opposition from the community, after he requested a beer and wine license. "There were definitely hiccups along the way."

Months later, tables are filling up, groups are using the space to meet and he even has regulars. Lunch has proven to be the most lucrative part of the day, with everyone from police officers to city employees coming in for his sandwiches.

Feldman said he works up to 14 hours a day, seven days a week, and is enjoying every minute.

With a sweet, but frank persona, Gyorgy Gyure scoops ice cream to a trickle of customers daily at Three Scoops and is still waiting for his business to pick up weeks after opening.

"Here you go beauty pie," he said in his Hungarian accent, as he handed a cone to a young girl in pigtails on a recent day. Gyure is a seasoned business owner, who has decided to try his luck in Lynn. This is his second ice cream store; the first one was in Brighton and was sold after a good deal came his way last year, the money of which planted the seeds for Three Scoops.

"I cannot work with anybody. I cannot take orders. I want to work for myself," he said.

Knowing his limitations, Gyure opened what he considers a manageable and easy business to operate. Like Feldman, Gyure used his carpentry and painting skills to whip the space into shape, and is there everyday, from open to close.

As a retired chef, Gyure knows there are good and bad days in the food industry. "It takes a long time to get a business going," he said.

Oleg Denishenko has been self-employed for most of his life.

"It's very good for a person to realize their own needs. It's freedom; it's the first step," said Denishenko, who is in the midst of preparing to open Interbook, a Russian bookstore which will also offer a handful of English best sellers.

Denishenko has had his own set of problems, and opening day has been pushed up quite a few times due to ordering problems associated with the Russian companies he deals with.

With a large Russian population on the North Shore, some of whom have peeked their heads in the store curious to know when the business would be opening, Denishenko said demographics was the deciding factor in opening here.

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"We see a lot of good fancy apartments around here. I think Central Square is changing in a good way," he said.

Dennis Joy of the Mayo Group, which manages most of the real estate downtown, is betting these newcomers will succeed.

"This will be a goldmine for the people who had the vision to come in here a little early," he said.

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