



PHOTO / REBA M. SALDANHA  
 Marie and Steven Feldmann, owners of the Gulu Gulu Cafe, say Lynn is a great city which deserves more credit.

# A CITY ON THE RISE

## *New Lynn couple feeling right at home in the City of Firsts*

By JILL GADSBY  
 THE DAILY ITEM

### LYNN

Lynn, Lynn the city of sin. That was the only thing Marie and Steven Feldmann had heard about this community before moving here a little more than a year ago from Jamaica Plain.

But they didn't let the city's sometimes-negative reputation deter them from buying a home in the Boston Machine Lofts building on Willow Street.

"We always wanted a loft and we couldn't find anything we could afford in Boston," Marie said. "We went online and saw (the lofts) and came to check it out."

Even though his brother-in-law grew up in Swampscott, Steven said the couple new very little about the Shoe City.

"We didn't know anything about Lynn at all," he said. "Lynn is a place we never had a reason to go to. We just wanted to see things for ourselves and take it at face value."

Marie, a native of Prague, said they were not impressed by their first visit to the city.

"It was a dreary Sunday afternoon," she said. "There was nobody on the street. It was all gray and disgusting. Everything just looked really run down."

But Steven said he saw the "City of Firsts" as a diamond in the rough.

"I thought the architecture was brilliant - it looked like there was potential there," he said, recalling some art deco architecture he saw at the Omar and Oscar Jewelry Store. "I thought, 'My God, it's absolutely gorgeous. This is what Lynn was and it just fell into disrepair.' This was a very hip place once upon a time."

Marie said she also began to see the hidden gems of the city.

"There are some amazing facades," she said. "And being on the commuter rail, being able to walk to the beach - it's great."

Steven said he and Marie then followed the Czech tradition of visiting a local pub to get a feel for the type of people they would be surrounded by.

"We went to Molly's, hung out for an hour and talked to people," he said. "(The city) sounded pretty nice."

Steven said becoming a Lynner seemed like the right move.

"Neither one of us is a big fan of the suburbs and the idea of having to hop in a car and drive to a restaurant or a wine bar or even to get a pack of cigarettes," he said. "There are a lot of things in walking distance here."

After making the move, Marie said it wasn't long before they joined a tight-knit group of newly settled neighbors.

"Nobody knew anybody, so we made friends really fast," she said. "The people are very friendly here. We

have more of a social life since we moved here. It was a great surprise."

In addition to friendly people, Steven said the city has a lot more to offer:

"Lynn is a very exciting place to be around," he said. "There's a great arts community, a great music community and there is such a cool group of people down here. In three or four years, I see this as a Davis Square kind of place - a little eclectic, a little funky."

Still, Marie said sharing where they live doesn't always garner the most favorable reaction.

"They're like, 'Oh, Lynn.'"

But Steven said that stigma has yet to stick.

"We get that until we bring people over to our place and then they're jaws just drop and they'll be like, 'Wow, this is amazing.'"

The Feldmanns ended up liking their new city so much, that they decided to start a business here. They are the owners of the Gulu Gulu Cafe on Central Avenue and are proud that they are considered a part of the city's downtown revitalization.

"We're seeing people coming from Marblehead and Swampscott because they heard the cafe is here," he said.

Marie agreed.

"People come in and say, 'I haven't been in downtown Lynn in 10 years - it's not as bad as I thought it was,'" she said. "We get feedback from people from surrounding communities and they're so excited to have us here."

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