

# Chocolate shop and gathering place

By LINDA GIUCA - Courant Food Editor

Hartford Courant

November 20, 2007

In the 1990s, Carol Kober-Narciss and her family were customers at a bicycle shop in an old train depot in Wethersfield. When the shop closed and the quaint building stood vacant, a light bulb went off.

'It was just sitting here, and I wanted to start some kind of business,' she says. After buying the building, renovating it and choosing an irresistible theme, Kober-Narciss opened her dream business, Narcissus Chocolate Cafe, last Saturday. The cafe is many things: coffeehouse, art gallery, chocolate and pastry shop - and, the owner hopes, a community gathering place. Comfortable chairs, soothing colors and artwork decorate the sitting area near the entrance. A few steps up to the second level brings visitors to the display cases and bookcases stocked with boxed chocolates, truffles, chocolate bars and seasonal chocolate gifts. Tables and chairs offer a resting place for customers to sip a cappuccino, nibble on a chocolate-dipped biscotti or enjoy a slice of cake. Kober-Narciss, who attended a weeklong chocolate course at the French Culinary Institute in New York City, wanted to make her own chocolates and truffles for the shop.

'But it's so labor intensive, and I felt I couldn't do everything,' she says. 'So the next best thing was to find [high-quality] chocolates.' She found chocolatiers in Connecticut and throughout New England who could supply her with all kinds of treats. Some, like Lake Champlain Chocolates from Vermont, are larger, more well-known companies. Others, such as a Manchester artisan who makes organic vegan creations using Belgian chocolate, are cottage industries. Even the coffee and tea served are from state companies: Daybreak Coffee Roasters in Glastonbury and Harney & Sons Fine Teas in Salisbury. Kober-Narciss went as far as New York to order Marie Belle hot chocolate mixes - Oprah Winfrey's favorites. For those who enjoy their sweets in another form, the menu offers cupcakes, cakes (including David Glass' Ultimate Chocolate Truffle Cake), chocolate fondue and s'mores. For early risers, there are bagels and croissants for continental breakfast, and she also offers a hot soup of the day. Kober-Narciss says she is encouraging customers, including teenagers, to think of her shop as a gathering place. 'We put the gazebo out there [on the front lawn] for the middle school kids to hang out,' says the mother of two sons. Narcissus Chocolate Cafe is at 7 Railroad Place, off Church Street, in Wethersfield. Hours are Monday to Thursday, 7 a.m. to 6 p.m.; Friday and Saturday, 7 a.m. to 8 p.m.; and Sunday, 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. Telephone: 860-436-9311.



FULFILLING A FANTASY, Carol Kober-Narciss has opened Narcissus Chocolate Cafe in Wethersfield. (11/15/07)



NARCISSUS CHOCOLATE CAFE has a seating area for customers to sip a cup of tea or coffee. (November 15, 2007)