

Merchants Look to Make First Fridays a Glenside Staple

Published: Wednesday, August 11, 2010

By Kaitlyn Foti, Staff Writer

First Fridays are slowly becoming a staple on Easton Road and Glenside Avenue in Glenside.

Since November, Cheltenham Township's Main Street has held these events on the first Friday of each month as an economic development initiative to encourage shoppers to visit downtown Glenside.

How has it worked?

"We've been participating since November," said Elayne Aion, owner of The Dovetail Artisans, on East Glenside Avenue. "Each month, we are seeing more and more people come in during the extended hours on First Friday, so it seems to be gaining momentum."

The township offers free parking starting at 5 p.m. on these Fridays, and many of the shops on these roads have stayed open later, until 7 or 8 p.m., some have special discounts or sales. There are giveaways, demonstrations, refreshments or visiting artists or authors.

On Aug. 6, Dovetail had a special performance by harpist Ellen Tepper, of Ardsley. Aion said in the past, they have also had a weaver attend a First Friday and give a special demonstration on her loom.

Aion is a member of the Downtown Glenside Merchants Association, the organization behind First Fridays.

"When I first opened my shop three years ago, I thought Glenside was right for this. I was one of the people pushing for it and finally last year we decided that the time was right to do it," she said.

Not all of the shops have had the influx that The Dovetail Artisans have had, however. Secondhand Rose, a consignment shop on Glenside Avenue, was staying open until 7 p.m., two hours later than usual, and running a sale, but owner Linda Sherin said that the traffic in her shop hadn't picked up.

"I hate to say that, but it really hasn't. I don't know if it's because Glenside Avenue is off the beaten path of Easton Road, maybe no one travels down this far. But I would love the customers," Sherin said.

Next door, the owner of Rocky's which was serving free iced coffee from 6 to 8 p.m., said they hadn't seen too many extra customers, either.

"Maybe it's not advertised enough," said owner Joe Ianuzzi, from behind the counter at Rocky's. "Maybe we don't have as much exposure here as the shops on Easton Road, who knows?"

But at each shop, the owners said they would stick with First Fridays, because they believe that it is going to pick up. With discounts and giveaways, not to mention free parking in the area, the merchants association sees a lot of potential in drawing customers during these events, especially when free refreshments are involved.

"If you feed them, they will come," Aion said.

Photo:

Harpist Ellen Tepper performs at Dovetail Artisans Aug. 6 during Glenside's First Friday event.

Photo by Kaitlyn Foti

