

Local artists the s

By Sam Harvey
Staff Reporter

Kim Doughty, perhaps best known as the ceramicist in residence at the Melting Pot studio in Dagsboro, has assumed ownership of the coffeehouse at the corner of North Pennsylvania Avenue and Central Boulevard in downtown Bethany Beach.

Doughty reopened the shop as The Artful Bean to kick off the New Year, and said intrepid "Exercise Like the Eskimos" participants (Jan. 1) had already propelled her past her anticipated business goals for the month.

"Now it's dead again," she said with a grin — but Doughty expressed confidence in the new venture. Winter's hush notwithstanding, she's open Friday through Monday, 7:30 a.m. to 4 p.m.

She said she expects to continue to see foot traffic from patrons at the popular shop *Japanesque*, right next door. And she added that Kay Jerns, former proprietor under the *To Bean or Not to Bean* shingle, plans to stick around as barista for The Artful Bean.

"She has a really good following," Doughty noted. "And the post office is right there, so if you're in town, you have to get your mail..."

At least so far, Doughty hasn't made many changes around The Artful Bean.

The coffee bar is much the same, featuring brewed and espresso drinks, chai lattes, muffins and pastries. There's still the book exchange, and overstuffed chairs and a couch with views onto North Pennsylvania Avenue from the corner shop's massive bay window.

The Artful Bean still features the unique set of computer cubbies at the back of the bar — the place was once a dress shop, Doughty pointed out, and that was at one time the dressing-room area. The shop offers Internet service — traditional or wireless.

But Doughty said she hopes to eventually transition away from a predominantly coffee-oriented business — toward a heavier influence on the arts and culture side of the coffeehouse business.

"The goal is to have it be a gallery, with coffee available," she pointed out. "I want people to come here for the art. I think Bethany needs some art."

The shop's always displayed a bit of artistic flair. Doughty said she and The Melting Pot glass masters (Phil Adkins and Justin Cavagnaro) all have had work on display there, even before she assumed ownership.

But she wants to take it further, to turn The Artful Bean into more of a venue and a showcase. "And not necessarily just for regional artists," Doughty said.

She has work from The Melting Pot trio on display, plus a case filled with local woodworker Tom Frey's distinctive offerings. And Damon Pla, the newcomer on this year's Southeastern Delaware Artists Studio Tour (SEDAST), has some canvases on display — Doughty said he'd painted The Artful Bean's soon-to-be-trademark sign, too.



Coastal Point • SAM HARVEY

Above, Kim Doughty stands by a case displaying some of her ceramic work. Right, some of Tom Frey's woodwork.

But she's also stocked one case full of Nature Depot jewelry (out of Severn, Md.), and another full of greeting cards — some of them handmade.

"I'm trying to make it more like a gift shop," she said. "Like a coffee-gift-art gallery."

Doughty said she plans to continue her artistic endeavors at The Melting Pot, at least part-time. "I still want to be creating all the time," she said.

But she hopes to make The Artful Bean a separate art-centered locale, and perhaps eventually swap couches for café tables to make room for some more display cases.

"This should be a great place to showcase our art," she said, noting the shop's location near the center of the Bethany walking district.

She plans to hold gallery showings to feature individual artists, maybe once a month, and keep the jazz spinning during regular business hours — maybe even host musicians for the occasional acoustic jam.

"I want this to be a place where people can come and hang out," Doughty said. "Not like a bar, but a place with a family atmosphere where people can come and enjoy some culture."

For more information, call The Artful Bean at (302) 541-8160 or stop by the shop, Friday through Monday from 7:30 a.m. to 4 p.m., at the corner of North Pennsylvania Avenue and Central Boulevard, in Bethany Beach.

