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**I**t sounded too good to be true, so Janice and Keith Raschko climbed aboard a trusty 1984 Yamaha Venture 1200 and set off on a 3,000-mile motorcycle quest to check out rumors of a restaurant where the customer decides how much to pay.

Braving cold and wet springtime weather, the Spokane business owners wound their way down Idaho to Salt Lake City and then Denver and, by the time they returned home, were committed to turning their tea-and-coffee parlor — Sereni-Tea Global Caffe — into a lunch-and-dinner restaurant plugged into notions of community-building, sustainable local agriculture, economic justice and neighborhood revival.

Sounds like a heavy menu, but the Raschkos say they are committed to helping the East Sprague business district bust out of the shadows.

It's a move that's already happening, say Jim Hanley and Teri Stripes. Hanley owns, with his daughter Heather, Acme TV and Tin Roof Home Furnishings, and Stripes is the city's program manager for neighborhood business centers.

"This neighborhood is ripe for opportunity," Stripes says. "Property values are lower so you can acquire property of high value and less expense and afford to redevelop into retail, office and — in a centers and corridors zone — you can have retail on the bottom and residential above."

**T**he East Sprague business district is just minutes east of downtown but faces a couple obstacles. One is the stigma — long out-dated residents say — of prostitution and drugs. Another is the fact that the district in recent years has been lined with businesses — commercial printers or wholesalers — that don't attract casual strollers and window shoppers. If nobody goes there, nobody is aware of the changes, allowing the stigma to live on.

"We get traffic," says Hanley from Tin Roof, "but there is nothing

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else right around us for the people that come here. We are hoping this art district thing will get some traction so [customers] will also have other places to visit."

The local business association has been working for several years to find a program or a theme that can spark a revival. Should it be part of the University District? An International District, given the plethora of ethnic food markets? There are a couple of things in play: an arts district, and finding a coherent theme such as those in the Garland and South Perry districts.

City Councilman Michael Allen is heading an effort to create a designation as an arts district. It seems the Davenport Arts District has become so successful and so gentrified that actual artists can't afford space there any more.

The idea is to move the arts district east, where studio and display space are more affordable. The thinking is that an arts district would attract galleries, coffee houses, eateries and other trendy businesses to make East Sprague a funky and desirable destination.

Eateries. Which brings us back to the Raschkos.

**O**ne day, Janice Raschko encountered an article about this crazy-sounding restaurant in Salt Lake City called One World Everybody Eats and its passionate founder, Denise Cerreta.

"So we took the motorcycle and went 3,000 miles round trip," Janice says. The Raschkos wound up staying a brief while with Cerreta, working in her restaurant, talking to customers and neighboring business owners, and came back to Spokane with a brainstorm.

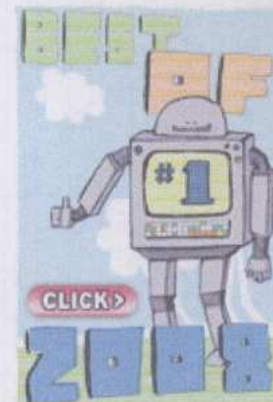
Sereni-Tea kick-started the couple's desire to revitalize East Sprague, Janice Raschko says. The community restaurant "goes to the next step to be even more fulfilling to the neighborhood and for such a better purpose."

The Raschkos are excited to be offering organic food, the more locally grown the better, offering livable wages to staff, and terrific dishes from an inspired chef who is not bound to a rigid menu and intrigue for diners.

"It's an open kitchen so when you walk in the cook is right there," Keith Raschko says.

"And you get the portion you decide and pay what you can afford," Janice Raschko adds.

Cerreta was taken in by the Spokane couple's enthusiasm. She came for a quick visit in June to scope things out and last weekend drove up for a two-month stay to help the Raschkos get up and running in September.



"This is a neighborhood that I think is very much up-and-coming," Cerreta says when reached by phone in Lewiston last Friday evening. In recent years she has been spreading the concept of Everybody Eats and says, "I am more excited about putting something on East Sprague than I have been in other areas.

"I think Spokane itself is ready for this idea."

Cerreta says she got a good vibe during her June visit, sensing a building critical mass of farmers markets, organic groceries indicating consumer desire for organic foods, but not enough organic restaurants.

Making money is not her mission. The vision statement listed at the nonprofit's Website [oneworldeverybodyeats.com](http://oneworldeverybodyeats.com) says, among other things: "We are dedicated to eliminating world hunger. We believe we can trust our customers to be inspired, honest and fair in their exchange of money and/or work for the fresh, gourmet, organic food we prepare both mindfully and in a heartfelt way each day. We will keep believing."

And it has worked for five years in Salt Lake City, Cerreta says, where the restaurant serves about 150 meals a night. Some people don't pay ... but these folks often volunteer their work in exchange for food, while others pay enough to cover those who can't.

Plus, every night the restaurant has a "complimentary meal," typically dal and rice, "that anybody can come in and eat and walk right out," Cerreta says.

Her goal is to reach out through the sharing of food and build a network that includes people of all incomes being treated fairly, connecting consumers to gardens and to farmers and to the vitality of organic foods.

A vitality that she, the Raschkos and others expect to spill over to the neighborhood itself.

"I am so excited. I feel something real special is going to happen and it's really going to breathe some life into that neighborhood," Cerreta says.

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