

CAFFEINATED

Grounds to get through the grind

Nestled in a corner of downtown Charleston stands Jackson Avenue Coffee, or "The JAC." Live music, pieces from local artists and the promise of a caffeine boost can be found in the east side coffee shop.

Catherine Ward, a junior family and consumer sciences major and coffee connoisseur, will reach her one year anniversary of being a JAC barista this March. Her favorite thing on the menu is the Big Ben, a blend of dark chocolate and English toffee.

At first, she said she was anxious to become a barista.

"Now it is something that is just natural," Ward said. "It's just like muscle memory."

Ward said her favorite thing about being a barista is seeing the customers.

"Once they walk through the door, they are friends with you," Ward said. "They will have a conversation with you. They are so vulnerable and so, just like...they will just tell you their whole life story."

Among Ward's favorite customers and coffee drinkers are the group of knitting ladies who come in and talk to her for hours about their grandchildren. Another customer, who often comes in wearing a kilt, spends his time at The JAC painting or participating in the open mic nights, and invites Ward to share in his artistic expression.

Coffee is more than a brew for Ward: it is a tradition and the heart for Ward's family and friends.

"Everything in my life is coffee," Ward said.

Ward said she has been going to coffee shops since high school. In high school, she would go with her friends to their neighborhood coffee shop before class to gather around warm cups and have warm conversations.

This past summer, Ward and her best friend decided to put their hearts on their sleeves: tattoos of a coffee cup.

Ward said the two would always share their lives over a cup of coffee.

"Coffee is just a bean, but it is everything," Ward said.

Coffee is a staple in college culture. Students can be seen carrying their travel mugs or logo coffee cups across campus between classes. Many students brew their own coffee

in their room, but there are some that make their daily or weekly trips to Starbucks or Java B&B.

Java B&B is the on-campus coffee shop located in the Martin Luther King, Jr. University Union. Java serves a variety of drinks, from hot and iced coffees all the way to smoothies. One perk students can enjoy if they frequent Java is a reward punch card. If a student buys 10 coffees from Java and gets all 10 numbers punched on his or her card, the 11th drink is free. They also feature a punch card for muffins, scones, and bagels.

"I would choose Java over Starbucks because Java is within walking distance, and it is more convenient to use dining dollars than having to have a gift card or pay with my money," said sophomore Kacie Cachera, a family and consumer sciences major with a concentration in hospitality management.

Starbucks, one of the most widely-known coffee chains, sits less than a mile away from Eastern. Students frequent the chain for their coffee cravings and, or for a different homework atmosphere. Within the past few years, Starbucks has implemented its own reward program where patrons earn "stars" for their purchases, and 125 "stars" earns them a free food or drink of their choice.

"I choose Starbucks over Java because they have more options, and the coffee tastes better to me," said sophomore Araceli Campos, a Spanish education major.

While Starbucks is known for their great coffee, their prices can be a bit high for the average college student.

"I like that we have our own unique coffee shop on campus," Cachera said. "I grew up in a small town, and I am used to shopping local. I am a big supporter of the first coffee shop that was established in my hometown."

Different people have different relationships with coffee. Some need coffee to start the day, otherwise, they cannot function. Some resort to coffee when they need to stay up all night to finish a term paper. Some are just habitual coffee drinkers.

"I drink coffee at least once or twice per day," Campos said. "At home, I go to Starbucks almost every day, but at school I go about twice per week."



50%

of students drink at least one to
four energy
drinks per month.

Info courtesy of
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