

# Customers ask successful restaurant to evolve name

By Susie Quinn, Connector Contributor

GARDEN BAY - LaVerne Elms is quick to smile as she efficiently cracks an egg over a grill, flips the toast and fries bacon for a mouthwatering breakfast.

The season is waning at her take-out restaurant on Garden Bay - it's called **Colonel Flounders**, but next year will re-open as **LaVerne's Grill** - and an unexpected lunchtime rush has arrived. Elms is in her element as she serves some tourists who have stopped in, as well as a few regulars who have boated over from one of the many moorages in the Garden Bay area.

This was Elms's second year of operation with Colonel Flounders; she took a business that had been closed for two years and has turned it into a success. Elms offers a menu that includes breakfast, burgers, seafood, fries and other side dishes and 16 flavors of ice cream. All meals are cooked to order.

Elms has a computer with Internet hook-up available for customers, and a hub where boaters can hook up their



LaVerne Elms of the soon-to-be LaVerne's Grill (Colonel Flounders)

laptops. Her coffee - a special blend made specifically for her by **Twentymans Coffee** in Garden Bay - is legendary.

Although Elms has spent the past 22 years in the hospitality industry (her last job was working in the business centre

at the **Four Seasons** in Vancouver), she has never cooked for customers. She has a software degree and a love of cooking. In her spare time she teaches computer classes on the side. No one is complaining about her food, in fact just the opposite.

"I'm very popular for my ling cod fish and chips - people come from Gibsons for them," she says.

Elms lives in Madeira Park. When she enrolled in the self-employment program at **Community Futures**, her business advisor, **Barry O'Hara**, steered her towards re-opening Colonel Flounders. She leases the building she's in, and has operated for two years. This will be her first winter closing (Elms closed the restaurant on Sept. 30).

The name change for next spring comes as a result of customer demand, she says. Although she has gained a reputation as Colonel Flounders, "I don't think (the change) is going to hurt business," she says. "Everybody calls it 'LaVerne's anyway.'"

LaVerne's Grill will open in April 2004 at the end of Garden Bay Road.

Contact Laverne Elms at (604) 883-1333 or e-mailing colonelflounders@yahoo.ca.

# WeatherBaby clothes for wee ones

By Susie Quinn, Connector Contributor

SECHELT - Babies on the Sunshine Coast will be well protected from the elements this winter, thanks to **Ann MacLennan of WeatherBaby Enterprises**.

"I manufacture what I call outerwear for babies and toddlers," she says, adding WeatherBaby offers fall, winter and spring clothing like booties, hats and blankets that are waterproof, yet cozy. She also has a new line of sun protective clothing that debuted recently. The cooler weather items are made with a durable coated nylon on one side, and fleece on the other.

MacLennan arrived at her innovative product after giving birth to her son, **Logan**, almost three years ago. She noticed that adults were wearing fleece and shells, "but I couldn't find any of that for kids," says the former tree planting cook.

"When I had my baby I would go outdoors a lot and I couldn't find anything suitable (for him) for the climate." The Self-Employment Program at **Sunshine Coast Community Futures** helped MacLennan catapult her idea into reality.

Her sun protective clothing is made with a special cloth that has a tight weave. MacLennan added the sun protective items to her WeatherBaby line in response to doctors reports on negative effects of sun exposure. MacLennan is also designing a cape for the rain. All clothing fits children from newborns to three years old and it's all washable.



Logan Flux models a Sunshine Coast protective outfit and outerwear by WeatherBaby

"I want to make things that are practical," she says, adding the first items were done in solid colors, but this year she branched out to prints - and the new patterns sold like hotcakes. She uses home sewers to assemble her handmade products - they do the piecwork from their own homes.

MacLennan also produces the **Bottom Buddy** - a square of coated nylon on one side and fleece on the other - that is ideal for all hiking, sitting on the beach, festival goers, camping, gardening and anything else the imagination can come up with.

MacLennan is slowly transitioning

from wholesaling her products into retailing them. Once her Web site is up and going, she'll delve into mail orders.

WeatherBaby products are available at **The Bay** downtown in Vancouver and **Peggy Sue's** in Gibsons. Catch MacLennan at craft fairs throughout the holiday season (West Van Secondary School's Craft Fair, Abbotsford Arts Council's craft fair and the Van Dusen Gardens Craft Fair, to name a few).

Contact WeatherBaby at 1-866-885-0207 or e-mail info@weatherbaby.com. MacLennan's Web site, www.weatherbaby.com, is under construction.

## COMMUNITY FUTURES SERVICE PROFILE

### Self Employment

SECHELT - A new face with extensive experience in management and career programs has taken over managing the **Self-Employment Program**.

Taking over for **Tony Hoare, Diedra "Dee" Goodwin** comes to the Self-Employment Program from **Capilano College** where for eight years she taught, and developed and managed career programs in accounting, office skills, entrepreneurship, tourism, marketing, management, and organizational behavior.



Diedra Goodwin

Goodwin is enthusiastic about her new role, "This must be the most satisfying work there is -- helping people succeed in creating a good livelihood on the Sunshine Coast. Tony was a strong champion of supporting new entrepreneurs in practical ways. He developed a very effective program and a strong team. I feel fortunate to carry this work forward with these talented people."

The Self-Employment Program gives people the assistance they need to begin a new venture through a combination of financial support, business skill workshops, and one-on-one business consulting. The program lasts 48 weeks. The first five weeks focus on developing a business plan with Business Advisors individually and specialized workshops on common issues.

"We know that someone can be a good entrepreneur, but not necessarily a good business plan writer," says Goodwin, "so we are there to help. We also want people to get comfortable with business practices like Market Research, Time Management, Tax Planning, Cash Flows and Financial Forecasting, so we provide a lot of skill-building workshops early in the program. Sales Techniques and Financial Management workshops come later, after they get a feel for operating their business. In addition to these workshops, Business Advisors are available for individual consultation."

The success rate of businesses started on the program is quite high, about 80%, compared to the usual 20%. "It is not easy for people to move from being an employee to being a successful entrepreneur. We have a very effective program of developing successful entrepreneurs and transferring business skills to people who are new to running their own small business. Enriching workshops, access to business experts, and 48 weeks of financial support make this a very desirable program.

"There are usually many more applicants than we can take," Goodwin explains. "We are limited to 34 applicants each year and can accept only five or six new people every two months. We choose the strongest applications from each group. Someone turned down gets an explanation and we will work with them to address the problems. They may re-apply in the next round."

"One tends to focus on the individual program participants as they move through the program, or look at ways to increase the effectiveness of our work, but the big picture is that this is an amazingly effective way to contribute to enhancing community capacity and a strong local economy. Smart operators with strong businesses generate a lot of economic activity."

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