

The Blue Duck's quacking

After rocky road, Southold's new bakery opens its doors

By Julie Lane

Keith and Nancy Kouris were Lindenhurst High School sweethearts when they first came to the North Fork in the mid 1970s to purchase pumpkins at Krupski's farm stand in Peconic.

Today, they're the owners of Southold Town's only operating bakery — now that Connie's in Mattituck and Zeller's in Greenport have closed and Peconic Baking Company has moved its retail operation to Riverhead.

And it hasn't been easy starting a new business in the current economic climate and navigating their way through town, county, state and federal approvals. Nonetheless, the Blue Duck Bakery Café opened its doors on Main Road in Southold in mid October, with its owners determined to demonstrate that what has been successful for them in Southampton also will thrive on the North Fork.

"We looked at each other and said, 'Watch,'" Ms. Kouris said in response to those who warn this isn't the best time to roll out a new business. "When we make a decision, we jump in with all four feet," she said. "I think it's the entrepreneurial spirit. When it's in you, you don't stop."

Their determination has served

them well with previous enterprises, they say, and they're equally determined that the \$1.25 million debt they assumed to buy and equip the business across Route 25 from Mullen Motors will be well worth it.

Equipment included a brick oven that cost three times more than their home in Patchogue and was delivered from Italy and installed by a European craftsman.

The Kourises owned a deli with a small bakery in Huntington when they were in their early 20s, then moved on to one in Lindenhurst, only to be wiped out by Hurricane Gloria in 1985. But they don't get discouraged easily.

Mr. Kouris took a job as bakery manager at King Kullen in Bridgehampton and signed up for courses at the Culinary Institute of America in Hyde Park and the French Culinary School in New York City, all the while harboring a dream of opening his own bakery.

Ironically, it was Ms. Kouris, whose grandfather had been a baker and whose family had been in the grocery business, who initially drew her husband to the idea. Her grandfather actually taught Mr. Kouris to roll his



Suffolk Times photo by Randa DeGard
Nancy Kouris prepares bread to put in the oven at Blue Duck Bakery in Southold.

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