

Gaia Market & Refillery brings ‘attainable sustainable’ options to Homewood

BY ERIC CRUMP
ewcrump@hfchronicle.com

Kermit the Frog famously crooned that “It’s Not Easy Being Green.” He was talking about the trials of being a frog in the world of Muppets, but consumers trying to live a green lifestyle might sympathize with the sentiment.

Sarah Tozer’s new shop at 1948 Ridge Road in Homewood is designed to help make environmentally sustainable choices more accessible.

Gaia Market & Refillery opened on May 19. The store specializes in products for those who want to reduce their environmental impact. Her slogan is “attainable sustainable.”

The shop carries items like plastic-free, compostable coffee pods; wooden kitchenware coated in olive oil; fair-trade certified, organic cotton socks (sales contribute to an LGBTQ+ organization); natural deodorants, to name just a few products mentioned recently on the store’s Facebook page.

The heart of the project, and located in the center of the shop, is the refillery, an array of bulk containers of home and personal projects that can be purchased in whatever quantities cus-



Eric Crump/H-F Chronicle

Gaia Market & Refillery owner Sarah Tozer explains how the refillery part of her shop works. Customers can bring reusable containers or use container the shop provides to get the amount of product they need rather than depending on packaged quantities.

tomers prefer, which Tozer said not only reduces waste but helps people select what they really want and will use.

The refillery includes things like body lotion, body wash, shampoo, conditioner, dish soap, laundry detergent and household cleaners.

There are reusable containers available for customers to use, but people can bring their own containers to the store. Tozer weighs containers before

they are filled, then weighs again afterward to determine how much product the customer is purchasing.

What customers won’t see on the shelves, although it’s there, is the research that went into product selection. Tozer said she is committed to offering authentic sustainable products and does the work to verify that products live up to their billing.

She looks for companies that use biodegradable material, cruelty free methods and fair-trade practices.

“I really trust every company here, and I try to go as local as possible,” Tozer said. Gaia’s website includes a list of the companies she buys from.

She said part of the store’s mission is to make it possible for everyone to do their part for the environment, and that’s why keeping prices reasonable is important.

On the store’s Facebook page, she posted a photo that speaks to her mission of accessibility and inclusion. It shows a sign on a building that reads, “We don’t need a handful of people doing zero waste perfectly. We need millions of people doing it imperfectly.”

Christina Roberts of Flossmoor discovered the store because she follows

several local shops on social media, and it was mentioned there. When she heard Gaia was open, she wanted to check it out.

“It’s fun and funky, but it also aligns with my personal choices on how I want to live -- more sustainably,” she said. “I really appreciate the accessibility.”

Tozer’s first vocation was as a chef, but carpal tunnel syndrome forced her to find a new direction.

“I was always looking on these eco-friendly websites, and just wishing that we had a store here,” she said. “I was like, well, I could probably do that.”

Tozer is also a composting advocate. She has a bin available so customers can bring food waste to the store, ideally in a biodegradable bag, and she will make sure it gets composted.

She hopes convenient composting and green products make the store a resource that will help people to develop habits of sustainability.

“I want to encourage people to do like one little step at a time. It doesn’t have to be a whole overhaul of your whole life. You can make changes slowly.”

The Great Frame Up
WHERE PICTURE FRAMING IS AN ART.®

- Custom Picture Framing
- Broken Glass Repair
- Framed Art & Prints
- Jersey Framing
- Shadow Box Framing
- Mirror Framing

Cherry Creek Plaza
18450 Governors Hwy, Homewood, IL 60430
708-647-0453 homewood.thegreatframeup.com

30% OFF Custom Frames
with Framing Order

I AM CONSTRUCTION & DEVELOPMENT

Quality and Affordable Home Renovation Services
Locally Owned Since 2011

- Bathrooms
- Flooring
- Basements
- Kitchens AND MORE

Before After Before After

CALL FOR A FREE ESTIMATE TODAY!
708-372-5786

f I Am Construction & Development iam.construction