

## ENTERTAINMENT

# Phoenix rising to be musicians' showcase

BY TOM TRACEY

Special to the Record-Eagle

BEULAH — Among the rows of nautical-inspired cream and cornflower storefronts in downtown Beulah pops an edgy tomato red stucco box, strikingly decorated with art deco signage and 1930s-style garage windows.

The Phoenix Café has

arrived.

Renovated with an eye to its 1937 gas station roots by building owner Norm Leers, the café was named for the mythical Phoenix bird, which rose from ashes to be reborn. The café itself is owned and managed by music aficionados Ron Harrison and Sheila Prochnow, who play host to



Record-Eagle/Doug Tesner

Sheila Prochnow is one of the partners at Beulah's Phoenix Café. Their goal is to establish the café as a gathering place and venue for staging concerts.

internationally known musicians who prefer intimate settings when performing.

"We're trying to create a 'Blue Note of the North' stopover right here in Beulah," said Harrison.

The atmosphere of the Phoenix Café is hip sophistication, with eggplant-toned walls trimmed by ochre doorways. As an added touch, views of shimmering Crystal Lake can be seen peeking through the multi-paned windows.

Patrons may come for coffee with beans locally roasted by Great Northern. Or maybe it's the fresh-baked treats like ginger scones. The café bakes its own sandwich bread, too.

But it's not just the eye candy, or the fresh baked goods, or the coffee that Harrison believes will put Phoenix Café on the map. To him, it's the music.

band."

Music promoter Seamus Shinnners emphasized the importance of supporting intimate musical venues like the Phoenix Café.

"The performers enter the same door as the audience, and they pass through the audience to get to the stage," said Shinnners. "As a member of the audience, you get the chance to interact pre-concert and post-concert with the performer."

For Shinnners, it is reminiscent of his time admiring the great statues of Italy, where "you can literally touch the works of art."

"For me, it's more than a coffee house," said Shinnners. "It's a gathering place to share a connection. Café Phoenix creates a Renaissance for the audience, where the community can gather and share a cup of coffee and talk about ideas."

"What's unique is that (owner Harrison) is a performer in his own right. As a musician, what you are trying to do is let the music wash over you, to sweep you away. His café affords that."

Upcoming performances tentatively scheduled for the Phoenix Café include the band Steppin' In It in May, Seth Bernard and Daisy Mae in June and Claudia Schmidt in July. With the limited seating, Harrison recommends phoning early to order tickets.

The Phoenix Café is located in downtown Beulah. It's open weekdays 7:30 a.m. to 3 p.m., Saturday 8 a.m. to 3 p.m., Sunday 9 a.m. to noon and on evenings when concerts are scheduled. For information, call 882-2005.

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