

OCTOBER 11, 2009

Westside



Atrium Building in Downtown Lansing | Dave Trumpe

[Capital Gains Home](#) | [Westside Home](#) | [Features](#) | [Innovation & Job News](#) | [Development News](#) | [In The News](#) | [Videos](#)

FEATURED STORY

[2009 >](#)

[2008 >](#)

- [December >](#)
- [November >](#)
- [October >](#)
- [September >](#)
- [August >](#)
- [July >](#)
- [June >](#)
- [May >](#)
- [April >](#)
- [March >](#)
- [February >](#)
- [January >](#)

[2007 >](#)

Westside - To Live and Brew in Downtown

BY: STAFF, 4/23/2008



She's young. She's hip. She's friendly. She's upbeat. And she's the kind of new urban entrepreneur who lives where she works, plays where she lives, and contributes to the surging vibrancy of Downtown Lansing.

She's Jessica Decker, owner of Decker's coffee shop on Washington Square in downtown.

Nearly a year ago, Decker took a huge risk and opened her version of a coffee shop in Downtown Lansing, just a few doors away from franchising corporate neighbor, Cornerstone Coffee. And the 25-year-old business newbie has managed to keep her doors swinging, while her competition recently had to close theirs (soon to be replaced by "Dub" sandwich local original, [Menna's Joint](#)).



"Unlike a franchise business," Decker explains, "I'm my own boss, so I don't have to call 'corporate' to get approval for anything I want to do. If my customers want something, I do my best to give it to them."

And that usually means adding a special item to her bursting menu board. "It's not about me; it's about the customers," Decker says with conviction.

Cool(ey) City

The foundation of Decker's loyal customer base consists of lots of [Cooley Law School](#) students, many of whom arrive when the shop opens and leave only grudgingly at night when she closes shop.

WESTSIDE

[WESTSIDE](#)

TOOLS:

SEARCH SITE

[PRINT THIS PAGE](#)

[DIGG IT](#)

[DELICIOUS](#)

[RSS FEEDS](#)

TYPE SIZE: [T](#) [T](#) [T](#)

[SUBSCRIBE TO OUR NEWSLETTER](#)



Now playing...
Over 45 unique festivals await you in Greater Lansing.
Search for local events at www.lansing.org

Decker does what she can to accommodate her big, legal fan base. During finals, she extends her hours. She also keeps "frequent visitor" stamp cards on file in the shop, so they don't get lost among the students' mountains of legal briefs and ethics textbooks.

And if the students get passionate about a certain local issue or initiative, such as "Operation Turkey"—a food drive that fed 73 families during the winter holidays—Decker supports them with donations.

She's also thrown her weight behind other local causes and organizations, including the Women's Resource Center, Leukemia Foundation, Women's Health Alliance, St. Vincent's Giving Tree and the Downtown YMCA.

As both a small business owner and a vital part of the young, urban crowd that lives, works and plays in Lansing's growing Downtown core, Decker has her hand in just about everything. To her, supporting customers doesn't mean just handing out lattes; it means getting involved in the community.

"We're like a family downtown," Decker says proudly. "If we had a problem here at the store there'd be 20 people outside waiting to help."

Little Miss Downtown

Decker percolates with enthusiasm about all that Downtown Lansing has to offer its residents, workers and business owners. "We have so much that is positive about downtown Lansing," she exclaims.

"We're a diverse and cultured community, and not closed at all," she says. "We have poetry readings. I think that says a lot about a community that embraces people who can get up in front of complete strangers and read their poetry."

"All the business owners are so close-knit and supportive," says Decker. "Whenever I can, I buy local and I attend every type of business support meeting I can. Like the [Principal Shopping District](#) that helps educate everyone about the construction that's going on here so people know how to navigate around downtown. And, of course, to let people know that we're still open for business."



Lansing culture for an urban entrepreneur such as Decker also includes [Grand River Connection](#), a young professionals' networking group that hosts social events, idea-sharing and young professionals' events at a variety of spots around town.

Decker has worked in the food and beverage industry since she was 15. She's worked under several owners, but it was her first boss who really encouraged her to turn the old Frisbee's Restaurant into Decker's coffee.

With Decker's first anniversary weeks away, this budding entrepreneur is well on her way to mentoring another entrepreneurial star, Bob Rose. Rose's colorful art covers the walls of Decker's and can be seen at Decker's any day.

"Bob works for the state and he's never taken an art class, but I love his art!" Decker says.

Now that she has relocated to a home just a few blocks from her business, Decker has found herself doing all the things Lansing's urban dwellers do, though as a hardworking entrepreneur, she also admits that her "100-hour workweek" means her spare time is limited.

But Decker is happy to share her knowledge of the budding life in Downtown Lansing, and to list its many urban amenities.

"We have the Riverwalk, which is gorgeous. [Impressions 5](#), our science museum, is doing the Giant Eyeball Exhibit in partnership with [Vision Care](#)." Decker's a huge fan of this venue. "Last month, we got to see chicks hatching!" she says.

"We have the [\[Michigan\] Walk of Fame](#) and [Potter Park Zoo](#), and in the summer, Washington Square hosts Blues on the Square, and we have all kinds of parades coming through here," she says.



She also tries to get back to her Lansing roots at the [Irish Pub](#) on Lansing's Westside when she can. "They have karaoke on Friday and Saturday night," she says, "with a wide range of customers, and sometimes they have live music."

For Decker, downtown has it all. She plays downtown. She shops downtown. She lives downtown. She runs a business downtown and she helps cultivate the next group of entrepreneurs that will continue building up downtown.

She is the new urban entrepreneur in every sense of the word.

In honor of their first full year, Decker is also giving back to her loyal customers by hosting a Customer Appreciation PJ Party on May 8. The party's set to kick off at 7:30 p.m. with a live band, DJ, food, drink and fun.

"It's our way of saying 'thanks', and everyone's welcome" says Decker.

[Dave Trumpie](#) is the managing photographer for Capital Gains. He is a freelance photographer and owner of [Trumpie Photography](#).

Photos:

Jessica Decker

Deckers customers

Deckers Coffee Co. in downtown Lansing

Artwork by Bob Rose

Emily Double

All Photographs © [Dave Trumpie](#)

[ARTS & CULTURE](#) , [DOWNTOWN LIVING](#) , [ENTREPRENEURSHIP](#) , [ENTREPRENEURSHIP](#) , [INTERNET](#) ,
[LANSING](#) , [QUALITY OF LIFE](#)
[WESTSIDE](#) , [DOWNTOWN](#)

[Contact Us](#) | [Privacy Policy](#) | [Terms of Use](#) | [Signup for E-Newsletter](#) | [Capital Gains Links](#) | [Have a tip for us?](#) | [About Capital Gains](#) | [RSS](#)