

cornercopia

Joseph Oh helps his son, Albert Oh, in the new corner store.



## Sparkling Grocery Opens at 3rd and K SE

ARTICLE AND PHOTO BY CELESTE MCCALL

“We’re glad to be back here to serve the neighborhood,” said Albert Oh, proprietor of Cornercopia Market at Third and K streets SE. The brand new – or rather, newly resurrected market – opened Aug. 10. “Third and K” is the name of the long-ago grocery store owned by Albert’s parents, Joseph and Ester Oh, who have retired to Clarksville, Maryland (near Baltimore).

Albert’s father, Joseph Oh, who happens to be a skilled electrician and carpenter, was helping out when

we visited Cornercopia shortly before its official debut. The sparkling new store was equipped with a gleaming deli counter containing turkey breast, Black Forest ham and assorted cheeses and meats. Shelves and refrigerated cases were already stocked with fruit juices, fresh produce, frozen foods, ice cream and sorbet. More merchandise was on the way; a beer and wine license had been obtained. Joseph’s son Albert, 32, arrived shortly thereafter, having just driven his lawyer sister, Monica Chae, to Dulles Airport to fly back to Los Angeles. She’d been

in town helping her brother navigate District red tape. (Another sister, Jina, is also an attorney.)

The family background entwines the Ohs with the emerging Southeast community near Nationals Park. The elder Ohs, Joseph and his wife Esther, came to the United States from Seoul, Korea, in 1975. Around 1987, they started renting a dilapidated building at Third and K streets SE. They opened a modest corner store there, which they named – what else – the Third and K Market. They continued to lease the structure for 12

years before purchasing it in 1994 for \$160,000. (The house next door went for \$40,000, and today it’s appraised at almost \$400,000. How times have changed.)

When Albert’s parents retired in 1997, they sold their store but wisely retained the building. The little grocery changed owners several times as the neighborhood deteriorated. In 2004, as surrounding buildings were demolished and people fled, the Third and K corner store finally closed. Around that time, Albert Oh revisited his parents’ building and de-

cided to resurrect it.

After considerable remodeling, Albert decided to make the move from Clarksville to an apartment over his new store. That cut down on his commute considerably.

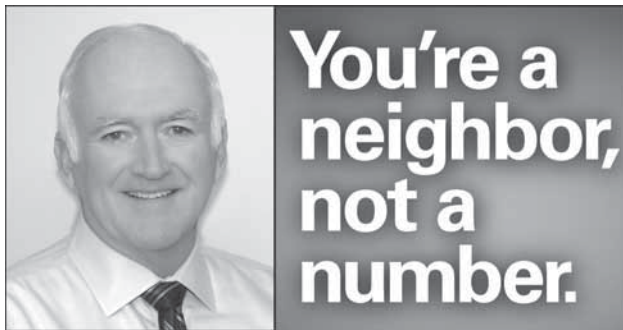
"My family has been in the neighborhood for a long time," said Albert, as he pointed across the street. "We've seen a lot of changes. EYA development is building townhouses across the street, there will soon be condos, luxury apartment and an assisted living facility. The Courtyard Marriott is a block away."

A park with an ice skating rink and food service pavilion is also on the drawing board. The new US Department of Transportation office building is also nearby, so is Metro. "A lot of old buildings were torn down, and this is the only block they saved," Oh said.

As we chatted with the Oh's, new neighbor David Meadows wandered in and looked around. "I certainly plan to shop here," he said. "Looks like they have good, organic food."

When asked why he moved here, Meadows responded, "My real estate agent, Chuck Burger, had shown me properties all over town, but I decided to buy here. I knew that [residential] developments were coming here, so I bought my townhouse around the corner at a great price. I lived through two dangerous, crime-ridden years before the nearby public housing was torn down. Now this neighborhood is the city's hot spot!"

*Cornercopia Market is located at 1000 Third St. SE. Call 202-253-5889. Hours are 9 a.m. to 10 p.m., Monday through Friday. www.cornercopiamarket.com. ★*



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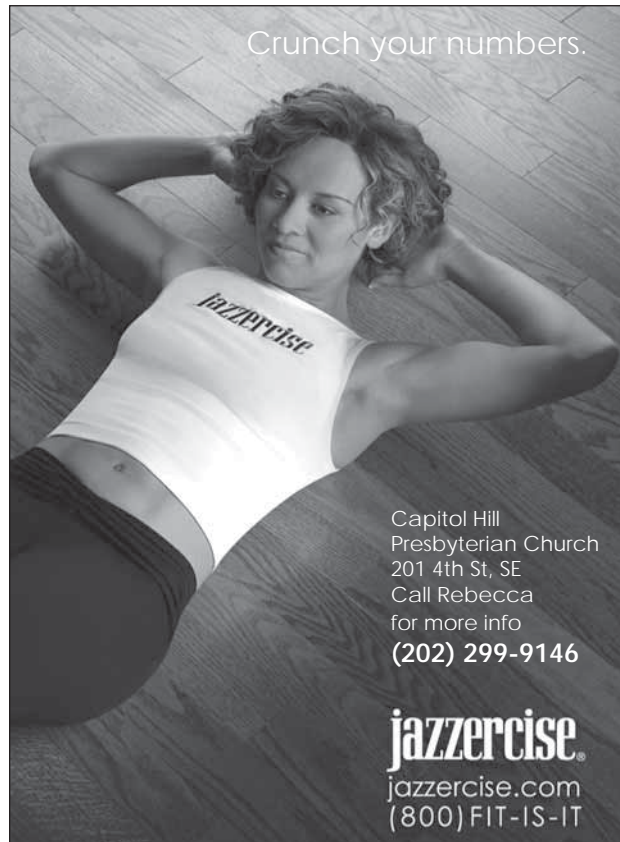
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