

# Coffee shop puts focus on diversity



**Online:** Hear the Rev. Mike Feely talk about the idea behind the bookstore. Comment on this story.

BY PERLA TREVIZO  
STAFF WRITER

A plain white meeting room at the St. Andrews Center in Highland Park now pops in bright blue and green as tables, couches, chairs and boxes of books inside await the unveiling of its new role as a community bookstore.

"One of the things I dreamed of having for the community was a bookstore/cultural center/coffee shop, a place where people from diverse backgrounds could come in, sit, spend some time developing relationships," said the Rev. Mike Feely, whose idea, The Common Grounds bookstore/coffee shop, is scheduled to open next month.

Mr. Feely, director of the St. Andrews Center, a resource for Chattanooga's multicultural communities, credited members of the Chattanooga Matters Leadership 21 class and donations from the community for helping create the coffee shop.

Chattanooga Matters is an organization founded in 1983 "to



STAFF PHOTO BY KELLY WEGEL

Thomas Clark, left, and Stephanie Barbour sort books for a bookstore and coffee shop in the St. Andrews Center.

engender Chattanooga as a city for God," according to its Web site, chattanooгамatters.org. About 20 years ago the organization created the Leadership 21 Class, a program for people 23 to 35 and centered on the biblical worldview of life and servant leadership.

The name for the bookstore/coffee shop emerged from the St. Andrews Center mission of serving a diverse group of people, he said. La Plaza Comu-

nitaria — a Chattanooga State Technical Community College initiative that offers English classes and Mexican elementary and middle school education as well as GED prep courses — and various other organizations are housed in the former church.

"We want to offer new readers a place where they can pick any type of book. We want the university students to come and have a cup of coffee. We want

## IF YOU GO

- **What:** Common Grounds bookstore/coffee shop grand opening
- **When:** July 9 at 6:30 p.m.
- **Where:** St. Andrews Center, 1918 Union Ave.
- **For more information:** Call the St. Andrews Center at (423) 629-9872

this to be a place for everyone to come and enjoy," Mr. Feely said.

Andrew Kean, one of the 18 members of this year's Chattanooga Matters Leadership 21 class, said Mr. Feely talked to them about what the St. Andrews Center does and mentioned the idea of the bookstore/coffee shop.

"We saw a catalyst for renewal that we wanted to support," he said. One of the leadership class requirements is to have a project that benefits the city.

The group has worked in the bookstore for weeks, cataloging books and looking for donations.

"Personally, it has been hum-

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## GET INVOLVED

If you wish to make a donation or volunteer, call the Rev. Mike Feely at (423) 320-3637 or e-mail him at [revfeely@yahoo.com](mailto:revfeely@yahoo.com).

## Bookstore

● Continued from Metro  
bling in a lot of ways," Mr. Kean said.

The bookstore will carry all types of books that are helpful to the mind, body and soul, including literature for children, fiction, philosophy, poetry and classics in English and Spanish, Mr. Kean said.

"We want this to be a real resource to the community," he said.

Mr. Feely said any profits generated will be donated to the public library. Common Grounds will be operated by volunteers, he said.

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