

**Greenwich Free Press** (<https://greenwichfreepress.com/lifestyle/food-drink-restaurants/renovations-at-solomon-mead-house-under-way-for-abilit-coffee-for-good-144012/>)

# Renovations at Solomon Mead House under Way for Abilis "Coffee for Good"

By: **GREENWICHFREEPRESS** | August 20, 2020

Renovations to the historic Solomon Mead House in central Greenwich are underway, an extremely exciting milestone in its eventual metamorphosis into a new cafe. In a collaboration between Abilis and Second Congregational Church, the Mead House will soon be the home to a unique coffee shop, Coffee for Good.

Coffee for Good, an independent nonprofit, is modeled after other coffee shops that employ people with intellectual and developmental disabilities; this nationwide trend has seen more than 30 different coffee shops open in 22 states over the last five years. Americans with disabilities suffer from chronic unemployment rates of more than 80%, a rate that Coffee for Good plans to reduce.



Future trainees in front of the Mead House.

Coffee for Good will also be a training program for its employees. After participating in the Coffee for Good training program, expected to last between six to twelve months, the employees will acquire the necessary skills to seek employment in the community.

Founder, Deb Rogan, who was inspired by her nephew with special needs, is confident that Coffee for Good will be a game changer.

“Modern technology, such as point of sale registers, allow people with disabilities to perform more job functions in both cafe and retail businesses, provided they have the right training” Rogan said in a release.

Amy Montimurro, CEO of Abilis, said the new training platform will give the individuals Abilis supports the opportunity to develop work skills and confidence that will eventually be generalized and applied at another work site.



Coffee for Good future trainees in a commercial kitchen.

“Not only will our community have the ability to enjoy and participate in this meaningful venture to empower others but other employers will see the skills and abilities of Coffee for Good employees and open their hearts and doors for future employment in their own businesses,” she said.

Built in 1858 in the style of an Italianate villa, the Mead House is undergoing structural renovations by Second Congregational Church (2CC). Upon completion, Coffee for Good will then build the barista bar and equip the cafe.

The Mead House is set in a spacious, tree-filled lot on the Second Congregational Church campus with ample free parking, a plus in Greenwich. Set back from the road, customers will enjoy their gourmet coffee either inside the charming wood paneled cafe, decorated with artwork created by Abilis clients, or seated outside on the terrace.

Slated to open early 2021, the cafe will offer a wide variety of teas and coffees, smoothies, pastries, salads and sandwiches, making it an ideal destination at any time of day. Coffee for Good will also sell fresh bags of coffee and merchandise, such as t-shirts, travel mugs and hats.



## Coffee for Good future trainee.

Rogan said she believes that the cafe's unique, on-the-job training program will successfully equip their trainees with the skills to allow them to secure future employment.

"There are very few training programs for people with disabilities. We will be offering our paid trainees professional and technical training. We are confident that our trainees will be able to transfer their newly developed skills to other cafe, hospitality and retail jobs" Rogan added.

Employees will receive extensive training from Abilis job coaches who will teach them all aspects of working in the cafe, from operating point of sale registers, learning the art of being a barista, serving customers and working in the kitchen.

Best of all, it self-promotes organically, by allowing potential future employers to view the capabilities and skills of the trainees demonstrating their newly acquired skills in an actual hospitality and retail work environment.

An important goal for Coffee for Good is to become a self-sustaining nonprofit whereby the operation of the coffee shop and online store will support its primary mission.

Coffee for Good expects to break even in the second year of operation but in order to build and equip the cafe and cover start-up costs Coffee for Good is actively fundraising at this time.

CFG plans to have a soft opening in early 2021 and a grand opening in late spring.

To learn more, volunteer or donate please visit: **[coffeeforgood.org](https://coffeeforgood.org/)**  
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