

**UNBRIDLED SPIRIT:** Friendly faces at A Cup of Common Wealth (below) and Chocolate Holler (opposite) both in Lexington, Kentucky.



*Café  
Spotlight*

Brewed Coffee	2.00	Brewing	3.00
French Press	2.50	Hot Chocolate	2.50
Pour Over	3.00	Steamer	2.50
Cold Brew	4.50	Italian Soda	2.50
Espresso	2.00	Tea	2.00
Single Origin	2.00	Iced Tea	2.00
Americano	2.00	Chai Latte	3.00
Latte	3.00		4.00
Cappuccino	2.00	Matcha Latte	3.00
Mocha	3.00	Extra Flour/Shot	.50
Macchiato	2.00	Non Dairy/Espresso	.50
		9 pieces of 8"	2.00

*Community Menu!*



PHOTOS BY NINA & WES PHOTOGRAPHY (NINAANDWES.COM)

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## A CUP OF COMMON WEALTH

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105 Eastern Avenue  
Lexington, Kentucky

(859) 255-0270

[acupofcommonwealth.com](http://acupofcommonwealth.com)

Monday–Friday, 6 a.m.–7 p.m.;  
Saturday–Sunday, 7 a.m.–7 p.m.

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## CHOCOLATE HOLLER

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400 Old Vine Street, Suite 104  
Lexington, Kentucky

(859) 523-3619

[acupofcommonwealth.com/chocolate-holler/](http://acupofcommonwealth.com/chocolate-holler/)

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# KENTUCKY CAFÉS

create community around  
coffee and chocolate

BY ROBIN ROENKER

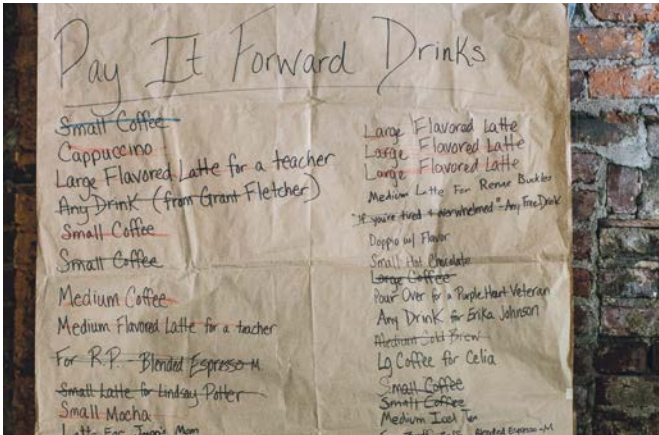
**S**alvador Sanchez, a native of Michigan, opened his coffee shop in another state for entirely rational reasons. When it came time to pick a location, he took pen to paper, listing the business potential pros and cons for all the cities he had visited. In the end analysis, Lexington rose to the top.

But when Sanchez speaks of his adopted hometown—four years since opening his downtown coffee shop, A Cup of Common Wealth—his rational self turns emotional.

In fact, Sanchez warns he may get teary-eyed recounting the aftermath of “Break-In Day.” On the morning of December 9, 2013, mere months after Cup’s grand opening, burglars broke the front window and made off with all the cash in the register.

“We were prepared to just give the coffee away that morning, since we had no way to make change,” Sanchez says, pausing, his voice catching with emotion. “But people were »

**A CUP OF COMMON WEALTH:** Embraces community in many ways: pay it forward drinks (below, left) and displaying notes from customers (below, right).



coming in, handing us twenties, telling us to keep it. One neighborhood boy brought in his piggy bank to help us replace the window. Customers we hadn't seen in awhile were coming in to bring food and tell us how much the shop meant to them. That morning, the city embraced us and showed us what it means to build community."

Sanchez opened Chocolate Holler, his second downtown Lexington storefront, earlier this year with a menu of sipping chocolates—an entirely new product for the city—as well as artisan chocolates from across the country.

Sanchez also owns a coffee roastery in Lexington called Magic Beans. It's where most of Cup's cof-

fee blends come from, along with Kalamazoo, Michigan-based **Water Street Coffee Joint**, where Sanchez worked during college.

Why did Sanchez open a chocolate shop rather than a second coffeehouse when it came time to expand? "We never want to be cookie cutter. We always like a challenge," says Sanchez, who was named Lexington's 2016 small business owner of the year by the local Chamber of Commerce.

A Cup of Common Wealth and Chocolate Holler are located just across the street from each other, within 150 yards or so, but the clientele and the vibe of the two shops couldn't be more different. Where Holler is polished, modern and clean, with natural walnut tables handcrafted by co-owner and

marketing and wholesale director for both shops Allen Warford, Cup is casual and unpretentious.

Hot chocolate appeals to the young at heart, so it makes sense that customers at Holler skew younger. Parents with young children often can be found sharing the space with college students from the University of Kentucky.

At Cup, however, customers span all ages and demographics. "The reason we picked this location was that it sits in a place where all these different universes collide. You are near the East End, which is one of the city's lower-income neighborhoods, but you also have Kenwick and Bell Court nearby, which have higher-priced homes. Plus, you have all the

professionals coming from offices downtown. It creates this cool community where people who may not normally interact with each other are hanging out together.”

Sanchez sees beauty in disarray. He uses words like “gnarly” and “unique” to describe Cup’s aesthetics. Tables and chairs are all donated, a hodgepodge of vintage dining room sets and fraternity house cast-offs. The condiment bar, made of old wooden crates and planks, was created by a customer.

“We’ve had people come in and suggest design changes at Cup, but I get so personally protective of it, because I know who painted the walls. I know who brought in those chairs. It’s got such a sense of community, and I’d never want to change that,” Sanchez says. “It feels like someone’s living room, and most people get that. It’s got this intimacy, a sense of coming to a friend’s house, and people want to be a part of it.”

The energy at Cup on a recent morning proved that to be true. Everyone through the door, newbie and regular alike, was greeted not just with the standard “How’s your day?” but real conversation starters like, “What’s next for you after this?” Regulars got compliments on new haircuts or commiseration about looming college deadlines, while first-timers were asked their names and encouraged to come back.

Adding to the sense of community, both Cup and Holler have popular “Pay It Forward” walls, where customers can pre-purchase drinks for future patrons by paying for a coffee sleeve and pinning it to the corkboard. These run the gamut from silly (“free cup to a man with a big beard”) to sincere (“for anyone going through a divorce”). The walls have “created this fun, energetic vibe, and have really helped our customers get to know one another,” Warford says.

While A Cup of Common Wealth commemorates Break-In Day with free coffee giveaways each December, community recognition is evident at both shops year-round. Sanchez’s mission statement—

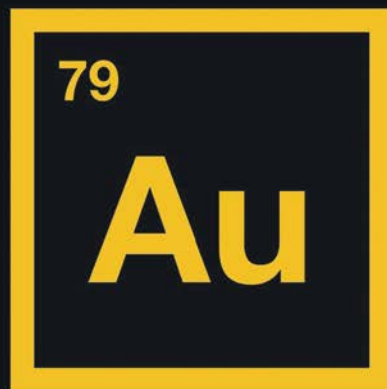
“Embrace Community. Serve Others. Create Culture.”—is displayed on walls at both shops.

“Our mission statement is how we make every decision,” Sanchez says. “We want to work with people who have those same goals.”

Every month, Cup and Holler host Nonprofit Fridays, where 10 percent of proceeds go to local charities. Sanchez works with Seedleaf, a local nonprofit that grows food for families in need, helping to turn all their grounds into compost. They’ve partnered with other local Lexington coffeehouses to create a culture of cooperation, rather than »

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**CHOCOLATE HOLLER:** The more modern of these two cafés offers artisan and sipping chocolates.



competition, leading to the popular Coffee Disloyalty Card, which rewards patrons with free cups after they visit all the participating sites.

In addition to Magic Beans and Water Street, A Cup of Common Wealth offers a rotating menu of specialty coffees from roasters, including **Four Barrel**, **Stumptown**, **Intelligentsia**, and others.

But for Sanchez and his team, the customer experience is priority number one—even above brewing the perfect cup of coffee. Baristas at Cup and Holler go through a rigorous, multi-staged interview process along with 75–90 hours of training, including apprenticeships and written and hands-on tests, before being hired full-time.

“We have three levels of barista, and we’re going to expand that to six. We want to show that we really are investing in people,” Sanchez says. “That’s what makes our staff turnover so low.”

“  
To be honest, you can get really good coffee in a lot of places now. That’s not as hard to find as it used to be,” he says. “And so, what’s more important for us, is just being real in our interactions with people.”

In looking for new staff, Sanchez and his team value interpersonal skills over arcane coffee knowledge.

“We’ve had baristas from other places not make it through our interview process. And on the other hand, we’ve hired non-coffee drinkers. We like to say that we’re in the people business serving coffee, as opposed to being in the coffee business serving people,” Warford says, referencing a quote first made popular by Starbucks CEO Howard Schultz.

Sanchez agrees. “To be honest, you can get really good coffee in a lot of places now. That’s not as hard to find as it used to be,” he says. “And so, what’s more important for us, is just being real in our interactions with people. We literally get to talk with people all day and get to know them and become friends with them. And in between, we just have to hand off a cup of coffee from time to time. I feel like we have the best jobs in the world.” ☺

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