

Olivia Preshong

oliviapreshong@gmail.com

Advanced Composition – Dr. O’Donnell

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## I’m Happy & It’s Homey

### A Review of Open Doors Coffeehouse

#### **Hours**

Monday - Friday – 7am-5pm  
Saturday & Sunday – 8am-5pm

#### **Address**

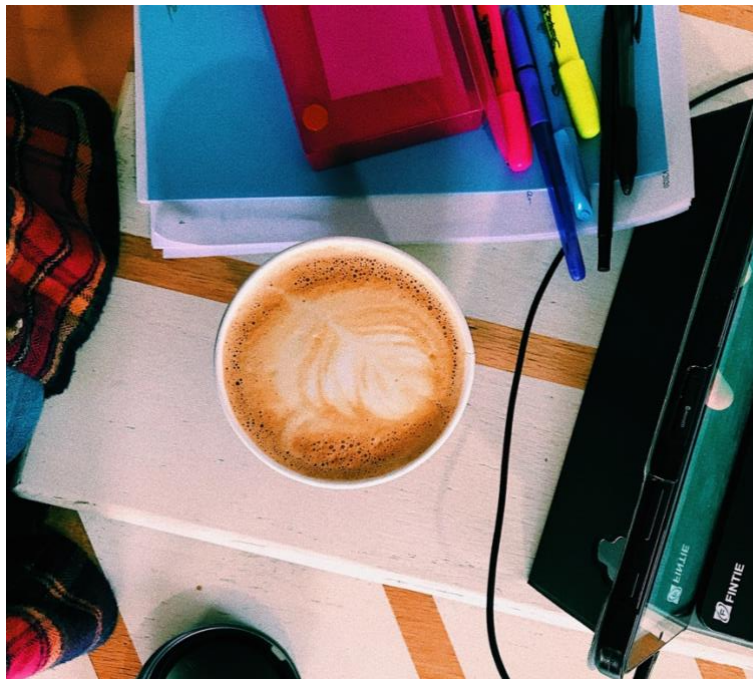
101 E. 8th Ave, Johnson City,  
Tennessee 37601

#### **Contact**

(423) 268-2997  
Info@OpenDoorsCoffeehouse.com

*I’m sitting at two small wooden tables pushed together with four light-stained wooden chairs surrounding it. Behind me is a display of mostly local arts and crafts, with deep blue pottery mugs sitting the closest to my reach—if you haven’t seen Mountain Mama Pottery, I*

*cannot recommend enough that you take a look at her beautiful pottery—but that’s another review for another time. As I sit here and type, a red paper cup with a black thermal lid sits next to me, heat radiating toward my fingers. The whiff of hot chocolate is tantalizing, but I’m trying to conserve my drink so that I don’t end up buying three. Though, drinks aren’t pricey, so several more as I write might not be the worst idea...*



*a typical study session at Open Doors*

My current location is the fantastic Open Doors Coffeehouse, a homey and happy highlight of Johnson City, my favorite place to study, to meet with friends, or to enjoy a perfectly hot white mocha. Open Doors fits the qualifications for a happy and homey coffee shop by maintaining a great environment and selling quality and affordable coffee, alternative drinks, and select food items, complying with COVID safety restrictions while still keeping its doors open (pun intended) to anyone comfortable leaving the house.

## The Building

So where is this place? Inside a one-story building with wooden siding painted a rusty red is Open Doors Coffeehouse. It sits at 101 East 8<sup>th</sup> Avenue, right on the corner of North Roan Street and East 8<sup>th</sup> Avenue in the heart of Johnson City.

At the front of the building is a large patio porch with wrought iron chairs and tables with wooden-slab tabletops. A large, upcycled watering trough is perched up against the adjoining set of windows, and a variety of plants grow in this trough throughout the seasons. Several months ago, I noticed a whole set of garden plants, including a tomato and several heads of kale.

Continuing around through the parking lot, you have the option to park in a spot or continue into a pull-around for the drive-through, with aesthetic black and white menu boards purposefully stationed along the concrete waiting strip for browsing while waiting in line.

Back to indoors, where I'm stationed for a review session. On the other side of the set of windows with the watering trough planter is a bar, skillfully made of two huge rough-hewn planks, with three tall mismatched chairs awaiting a visitor. One swivels, one is black and sleek and modern, and one has a fluffy tan seat cushion. To the left of the bar is a bright blue shutter that has been repurposed with twine and mini paperclips that hold handmade earrings, with a small shelving unit stationed next to the main entrance, with mugs and bags of specialty coffees stacked across it. On the other side of the door is a collection of mugs, leather bags, sparkling fruit juice, homemade soap, etc., artistically distributed across crates and bookshelves. Across from the bar is two sets of tables, one of which is where I'm stationed. My table has a small blue vase with two dried yellow flowers inside, typical of the tables here. On the wall against which

I'm sitting is an ivy wreath and a brown paper banner advertising their fall specials, drinks such as pumpkin spice and apple lattes.



*a view from the window bar*

Next, we have the counter where people order, where scones and chocolates and stickers and masks are displayed and behind which drinks are made. The front of the counter is old wooden doors. (Have you gotten the image that so many things in here are repurposed? It's adorable!) with a dark brown baseboard, the combination of which is artsy and homey and super cute. On the back wall is a black chalkboard menu strip. It has stayed the same for a long time,

and I take this to mean that the menu is typically the same, with new or seasonal items typically advertised on graphics placed around the shop.

Beyond the counter is a set of 5-6 tables, several of which are partially made up of booths with electric light-blue faux leather, my favorite seating option. The booth cushions are comfy, and spreading out my books with a hot drink while curled up in the corner is undeniably cozy and the perfect spot for an afternoon study session. A shelf with books is squeezed into a corner, creating a trendily studious aura. Even with COVID-19 distanced-seating enacted, there is plenty of room for study sessions, business-related meetings, coffee dates, etc. Against the back wall (on the way to two single-stall bathrooms) is a conglomeration of local artwork.

## The Service

The staff are consistently friendly, appropriately talkative, and eager to accommodate. Every barista I have interacted with has been easy to talk to, unintimidating, and quick to offer suggestions if I'm in the mood to try something new, which in several cases has lent itself to the discovery of new favorite drinks, such as dirty chai (a chai latte with a shot of espresso).

One drawback is that waits can occasionally occur, simply due to the barrage of people in the drive-through line, which is sometimes an overload for the baristas who are also serving the indoor customers. Rush hours do not seem to be a daily or even regular occurrence, but they are possible depending on the day and occasion. Regardless, I am always willing to wait a few extra minutes for quality, and from my experience in every area of food and drink, only the food and drink worth waiting for have such long lines. When customers know they have a quality cup of

coffee or a delicious waffle waiting, they are apt to be patient. The baristas also appear to be working rapidly, so there is an easy confidence in the fact that your wait is not unnecessary.

An additional service that most people expect in coffee shops is Wi-Fi. Other than one or two single times when the Open Doors' router wasn't working properly, I have always gotten strong and reliable Wi-Fi signal. As a college student during a time of nearly exclusively online classes, Wi-Fi for my laptop is an absolute necessity, and Open Doors has been up to task.

Open Doors also brings drinks out to cars for customers who have placed an order via phone call. I have not taken advantage of that service myself because I enjoy the indoors environment so much, but it seems to be very reliable and convenient.

One of my favorite services at Open Doors is their punch-card system. Ask your barista for a card, and you will receive a punch for every drink you buy. Once you have ten punches, your next drink is free! My eleventh drink will always be a large of something extra-special.

## The Products

And finally, the food & drink! My Open Doors favorites are white mochas, hot chocolate, and chai tea lattes, but I have only been regularly going for about two semesters, so I anticipate that repertoire growing and changing during the remainder of my Tri-Cities life. With that said, here is a look into all the fantastic foods and drinks that Open Doors has to offer. The menu is as follows:

| ESPRESSO   |                 |                 | FROZEN <small>Blended</small> |    | OVER ICE <small>and more</small>   |                 |                     |                 |
|--|-----------------|-----------------|-------------------------------|----|--|-----------------|---------------------|-----------------|
| SM   | REG             | LG              | REG                           | LG | REG  | LG              |                     |                 |
| <b>Open Doors Mocha</b><br><small>White Chocolate, Swirls of Caramel, Steamed Milk with Espresso</small>   | 3 <sup>75</sup> | 4 <sup>45</sup> | 4 <sup>75</sup>               |    | <b>Open Doors Mocha</b>  | 4 <sup>55</sup> | 4 <sup>95</sup>     |                 |
| <b>Vanilla Latte</b><br><small>Caffe Latte with Vanilla Syrup</small>  | 3 <sup>45</sup> | 4 <sup>15</sup> | 4 <sup>65</sup>               |    | <b>Vanilla Latte</b>   | 4 <sup>45</sup> | 4 <sup>85</sup>     |                 |
| <b>Caffe Mocha</b><br><small>Gourmet Chocolate Syrup, Steamed Milk and Espresso</small>  | 3 <sup>45</sup> | 4 <sup>15</sup> | 4 <sup>65</sup>               |    | <b>Caffe Mocha</b>   | 4 <sup>45</sup> | 4 <sup>85</sup>     |                 |
| <b>White Mocha</b><br><small>White Chocolate Syrup, Steamed Milk and Espresso</small>  | 3 <sup>75</sup> | 4 <sup>45</sup> | 4 <sup>75</sup>               |    | <b>White Mocha</b>   | 4 <sup>55</sup> | 4 <sup>95</sup>     |                 |
| <b>Caffe Latte</b><br><small>Steamed Milk and Espresso</small>   | 2 <sup>95</sup> | 3 <sup>65</sup> | 4 <sup>15</sup>               |    | <b>Chai Latte</b>  | 4 <sup>35</sup> | 4 <sup>95</sup>     |                 |
| <b>Cappuccino</b><br><small>Foamed Milk and Espresso</small>   | 2 <sup>95</sup> | 3 <sup>65</sup> | 4 <sup>15</sup>               |    | <b>Vanilla Crème*</b>  | 4 <sup>25</sup> | 4 <sup>75</sup>     |                 |
| <b>Americano</b><br><small>Espresso and Hot Water</small>  | 1 <sup>95</sup> | 2 <sup>55</sup> | 3 <sup>05</sup>               |    | <b>Green Tea Matcha</b>  | 4 <sup>35</sup> | 4 <sup>85</sup>     |                 |
| <b>Espresso</b>  | 1 <sup>80</sup> | 2 <sup>30</sup> | 2 <sup>80</sup>               |    | <b>Hot Chocolate Freeze*</b>   | 4 <sup>35</sup> | 4 <sup>85</sup>     |                 |
|  |                 |                 |                               |    | <b>Fruit Smoothie*</b>   | 4 <sup>25</sup> | 4 <sup>75</sup>     |                 |
|  |                 |                 |                               |    | <small>Protein lite versions available for lattes and mochas<br/>* Kids sizes available - 2.20</small> |                 |                     |                 |
| <small>Substitute Soy Milk or Half &amp; Half \$.60<br/>Additional Flavor Shot \$.50<br/>Additional Espresso Shot \$.60<br/>Decaf &amp; Skim Milk Available Upon Request</small> |                 |                 |                               |    | <b>TRY SOME OF OUR SPECIALTIES</b>   |                 |                     |                 |
|  |                 |                 |                               |    | <b>Nitro Brew</b>  | 3 <sup>75</sup> | <b>Naked Waffle</b> | 4 <sup>00</sup> |
|  |                 |                 |                               |    | <b>ALTERNATIVES</b>  |                 |                     |                 |
|  |                 |                 |                               |    | <b>Chai Latte</b>  | 3 <sup>35</sup> | 3 <sup>85</sup>     | 4 <sup>15</sup> |
|  |                 |                 |                               |    | <b>Hot Chocolate</b>   | 2 <sup>70</sup> | 3 <sup>20</sup>     | 3 <sup>40</sup> |
|  |                 |                 |                               |    | <b>Fresh Brewed Coffee</b>   | 1 <sup>80</sup> | 2 <sup>00</sup>     | 2 <sup>25</sup> |
|  |                 |                 |                               |    | <small>regular or decaf</small>  |                 |                     |                 |

| BACKYARD EGGS ET CETERA   |                               |
|---|-------------------------------|
| (ALMOST) <b>FAMOUS Biscuits &amp; Gravy</b>   | 1 BISCUIT 3.5<br>2 BISCUITS 5 |
| BUTTERMILK BISCUITS + GRAVY   |                               |
| <b>OPEN DOORS Breakfast Biscuit</b>   | 6                             |
| <small>PIT HAM, SCRAMBLED EGG + SHARP CHEDDAR ON A BUTTERMILK BISCUIT</small>   |                               |
| <b>HUEVOS RANCHEROS</b>   | 11                            |
| <small>SKILLET POTATOES, CHORIZO, BLACK BEAN CAKES, SCRAMBLED EGGS, TORTILLA CHIPS, CILANTRO CREMA, FETA CHEESE + TOMATILLO SALSA</small> |                               |
| <b>SAUSAGE BISCUIT</b>  | 4                             |
| <small>SAUSAGE OR VEG SAUSAGE, CARAMELIZED RED ONIONS + SHARP CHEDDAR ON A BUTTERMILK BISCUIT</small>                                     |                               |
| <b>Farmer's Toast</b>   |                               |
| <small>GARLIC INFUSED OLIVE OIL, AVOCADO, RED PEPPER FLAKES, + BALSAMIC GLAZE</small>   |                               |
|   | 7 + EGG 9                     |
| <b>LITTLE CHICAGO EGG PLATE</b>   | \$ 11.00                      |
| <small>SCRAMBLED EGGS, BISCUITS + GRAVY, SKILLET POTATOES, + SAUSAGE, SOY SAUSAGE, OR BACON</small>                                       |                               |
| <b>SIDES</b>  |                               |
| BACON 2   | SKILLET POTATOES 3            |
| SAUSAGE 2.75  | PIE + BISCUIT 3.5             |
| SOY SAUSAGE 2.75  | TOAST 1.5                     |
| GRAVY 1.5   | BASKET OF BISCUITS 7.5        |
| BUTTERMILK BISCUIT 2  | AVOCADO HALP 2                |
| SCRAMBLED EGGS 2  | BLACK BEAN CAKES 3            |
| <small>(SEE LUNCH &amp; BELGIUM LIEGE WAFFLE MENU ON BACK)</small>  |                               |

| LUNCH  |      |
|--|------|
| <b>GRILLED CHEESE</b>  | 5    |
| <small>BUTTERED TEXAS TOAST OR WHEAT TOAST WITH SHARP CHEDDAR CHEESE</small>                                 |      |
| <b>Grilled Ham &amp; Cheese</b>  | 7    |
| <small>BUTTERED TEXAS TOAST OR WHEAT TOAST WITH SHARP CHEDDAR CHEESE, PIT HAM + CARAMELIZED ONIONS</small>   |      |
| <b>B.L.T.</b>  | 5    |
| <b>BLAT.</b>   | 6.5  |
| <small>TEXAS TOAST OR WHEAT TOAST WITH BACON, LETTUCE, AVOCADO, TOMATO + MAYO ON THE SIDE</small>            |      |
| <small>(GLUTEN FREE BREAD AVAILABLE UPON REQUEST)</small>  |      |
| <b>BLACK BEAN CAKE SLIDERS</b>   | 6    |
| <small>THREE BLACK BEAN CAKE SLIDERS ON HAWAIIAN ROLLS WITH CILANTRO CREMA + TOMATILLO SALSA</small>         |      |
| <b>Bowl of Soup</b>  | 5    |
| <b>OPEN DOORS SALAD</b>  | 8    |
| <small>SPRING MIX, RED ONION, BACON, FETA, CROUTONS + AVOCADO</small>  |      |
| <b>BERRY SALAD</b>   | 8    |
| <small>SPRING MIX, BLUE CHEESE CRUMBLES, STRAWBERRIES, BLUEBERRIES, BACON, CANNED PECANS + RED ONION</small> |      |
| <b>BELGIUM WAFFLES LIEGE</b>   |      |
| <b>Cinnamon Roll Deluxe</b>  | 4.75 |
| <b>LUMBERJACK DELUXE</b>   | 4.75 |
| <b>FRESH FRUIT DELUXE</b>  | 4.75 |
| <b>Peanut Butter Deluxe</b>  | 4.75 |
| <b>SLOWBERRY COBBLER DELUXE</b>  | 4.75 |
| <b>STICHY BUN DELUXE</b>   | 4.75 |
| <b>Nutella Deluxe</b>  | 4.75 |
| <b>NAKED WAFFLE</b>  | 4    |
| <b>TOPPING</b>   | 5    |

As you can see above, Open Doors boasts a varied menu, with many options for both food and beverages. If you haven't yet heard praise for Open Doors waffles, it's only a matter of time; they seem to be a Johnson City favorite, though I have yet to try them myself. My only experiences with non-beverage Open Doors have been chicken salad, grilled cheese, and tomato



soup. All three foods were satisfactory, though not necessarily shockingly good. For the somewhat expensive price, I don't plan on purchasing food items regularly, but I am in no way discouraging readers from at least trying the food for themselves.



*grilled cheese & tomato soup, takeout version*

My experience with Open Doors beverages has been totally positive and most definitely one I plan to continue. My go-to drink, a large and hot white mocha, is purely heavenly. It is rich and sweet, though not overpoweringly so, with deep espresso undertones and a frothy whipped



cream topping—a perfectly warm white mocha is basically just like a hug in a mug. (Chef’s kiss.)

Hot chocolate is an underrated classic in my opinion, ideal to satisfy a sweet drink craving without consuming caffeine. Open Doors makes the best hot cocoa I have ever tasted, and a large with whipped cream only costs \$3.75.

Chai lattes are fantastic for a non-coffee person, with notes of cinnamon and chai balanced out by luscious creaminess. The iced version is perfectly pungent for an afternoon refresher.

## The Verdict

If you’re looking for a happy, homey coffee shop with luxuriously delicious beverage options, Open Doors Coffeehouse fits the bill. It may have nearby competitors, but the energetic environment, capable and friendly baristas, convenient location, eleventh-drink-free system, and unmatched drink flavors keep me going back. Give it a try, and you might just experience the same!

And if you do stop by, you just might see me sitting in a corner booth—you’ll know it’s me if you see a gal with a white mocha and a hot chocolate and a contented grin, because I’m practically at home.