

Advocates restore Flamingo Restaurant

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Flamingo Restaurant, an eatery that serves traditional East African fare, specifically Ethiopian, Eritrean, and Somali, in St. Paul's Midway, recently underwent new ownership.

The restaurant, which originally opened in 2006, is now under the guidance of East African women's activist and community leaders, Shegitu Kebede and Frewoini Haile.

"Fre and I are very excited about entering the restaurant business," said Kebede. "It's truly our passion...we love serving people. We also need to become self-sufficient so that we can make a difference in our lives as well as the lives of others, especially East African women. Running a successful business can get us to this goal."

The new owners are setting out to provide their guests with a great East African dining experience. "All of our traditional dishes are based on family recipes that have been passed on from generation to generation," said Kebede. "It's through our recipes that we create a family atmosphere where people can feel at home."

Both Kebede and Haile have built their careers on advocating for women and East African communities in Minnesota. Kebede, a McKnight Foundation's Virginia McKnight Award in Human Service recipient, began her career as a community activist with St. Paul-based CommonBond Communities where regularly she met suffering immigrant women who lacked sufficient training to find successful job placement. In their shared experiences, she found her call to action. In 2003, she founded Going Home, Inc.—a program that provides cleaning jobs for immigrant mothers and other new immigrants.

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