

# Wednesday is Whistlestop

By Geoff Moore

Correspondent

Summer was in the air as a group of about a dozen boys played football on the grass between Donelan's and the Whistlestop Café on a warm Wednesday afternoon at the Mall at Lincoln Station.

Players switched in an out of the game to rest or take a bite of a sandwich or a sip of an icy drink. Children and adults fill the tables outside the Whistlestop, some picking at sandwiches from paper-lined green plastic baskets, and others literally laid back and chatting casually.

Parker Mundt, a seventh grader from Lincoln Public Schools, said the Whistlestop is

the place to be on Wednesdays after school ends at 12:30 p.m.

"Everyone comes to see their friends. It's a good place to hang," Mundt said. "It's like extended school ... without the teachers."

Inside the Whistlestop, owner Brian Mehigan knows his customers well.

"These girls have been through the system," Mehigan joked as he pointed to a group of girls, who are older than those outside, judging by the car keys resting against designer sunglasses on the table.

Ali Mandelkorn and Julie Schuerhoff said they have been coming to the café forever. After doing a quick fingercount,

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Courtesy photo by Geoff Moore

**Whistlestop Café owner Brian Mehigan holds the door for his young customers. The Whistlestop is a popular after-school destination for Lincoln teens on Wednesday early release days.**

# They all stop at the Whistlestop

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even Mandelkorn was surprised when she filled both hands and more. "Eleven years," she said.

Mandelkorn, who is now studying at Scripps in Los Angeles, said that she visits every break and has been in for lunch with her friends every day since getting home.

"It's definitely the place to be," Schuerhoff said.

Maggie Durlacher, who went to Sudbury Public Schools and

now attends Vanderbilt University in Nashville, Tenn., said she started to come to the Whistlestop for lunch when she met Mandelkorn and Schuerhoff at Lincoln-Sudbury Regional High School. "Brian" (Mehigan) knows all their names and exactly which sandwiches they like, she said proudly.

"He even knows how much turkey I like in mine," said Schuerhoff, now a student at Connecticut College, holding

her finger and thumb just a fraction apart.

"And oh, the frozen mint brownies he keeps in the fridge," the girls chimed in simultaneously, as if cued by an unseen hand.

In August, it will be three years since Mehigan took over ownership of the Whistlestop from Steve Flood, who he said started the tradition "Wednesday is Whistlestop" in 1992.

"It's their first taste of

maturity, almost a right of passage. Kids look forward to it," said Mehigan, sitting on a bench overlooking the game on the green.

When he was first considering taking on the Whistlestop, Mehigan said Flood told him that he could come and see the place any day but Wednesdays. Intrigued, Mehigan visited anyway and found the Whistlestop packed. Starting at around 12:40 p.m. it still is, as Mehigan's father Steve — who Mehigan affectionately called "the real workhorse of the place" — and staff members Will and Stephen Hagenian attested.

Mehigan said children come down on Wednesdays at their parents' discretion.

"It's informal, the food is fresh, and everything is made to order. We and the kids are very patient when it's busy," Mehigan said. "Parents seem to be in tune with the kids. [The kids] are well behaved and know to clean up after they've finished."

Wednesdays may be good for business, but Mehigan said he also looks out for the children and they only have to come into the shop if a tackle goes awry and they need patching up.

Continuity is key, Mehigan said. Children who come from Lincoln Public Schools bring their friends back over for lunch when they get to the high school and that, he said, helps drive the business.

"They form happy memories



Courtesy photo by Geoff Moore

Ali Mandelkorn, Maggie Durlacher, Julie Schuerhoff hang out at the Whistlestop