

PLACES

by Mallory Gelert

SWEET IDEA

Take a cup of inspiration, stir in a generous grant, and you've got the recipe for Zoe's Cupcake Café. The Teaneck shop was launched in June as a place for teen mothers to get a foothold in the workplace.

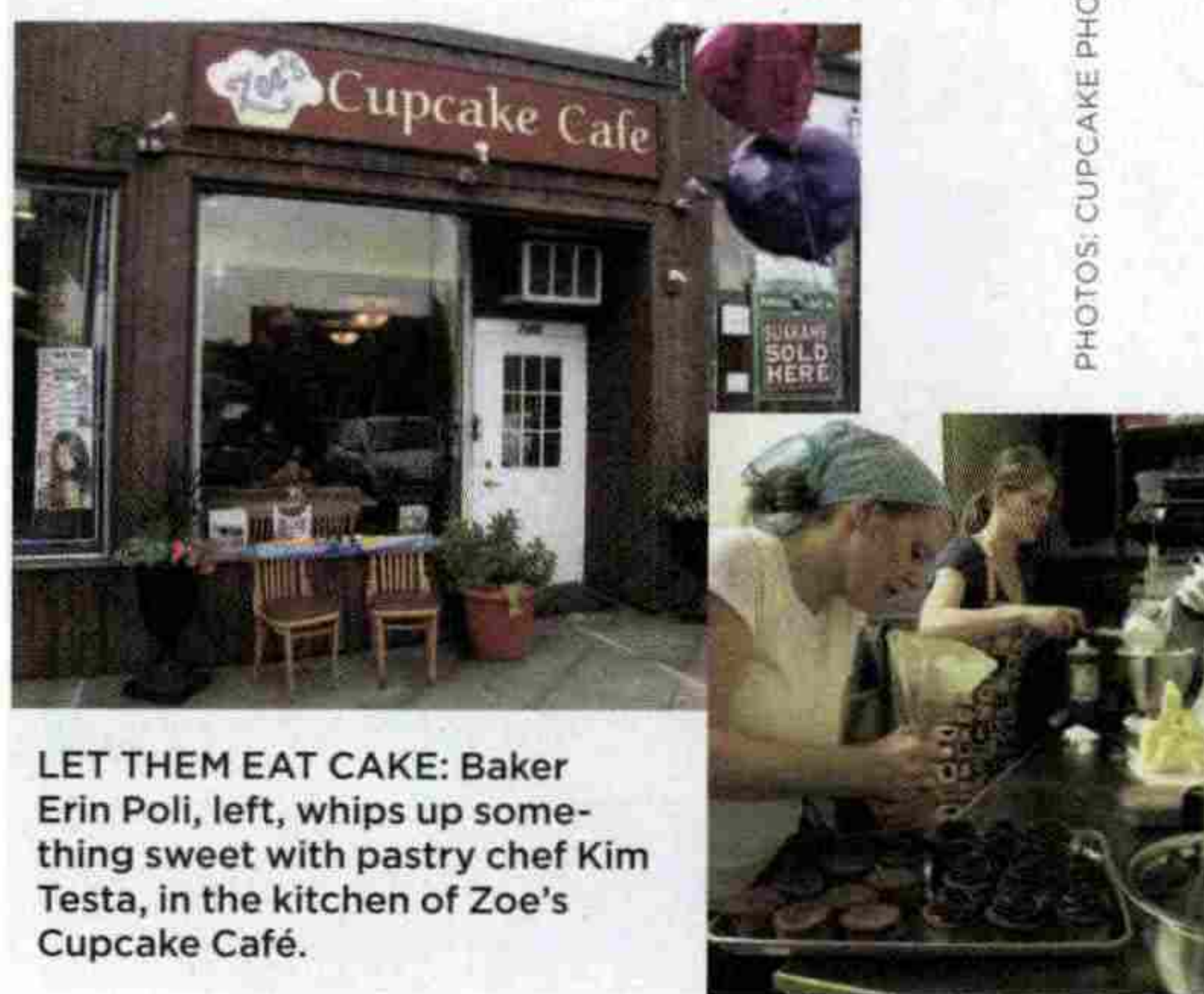
"The shop is designed to be a turn-around opportunity for these girls," says Maxine Frampton, director of Women United in Philanthropy, the Bergen County group that provided \$100,000 in financing for Zoe's Place Inc.—a nonprofit dedicated to helping teen moms and their babies—to open the café.

"Most of the women are young mothers trying to do a good job," says Jane Fiedler, who helped bring the café to life. "They haven't done anything wrong."

Still, says Fiedler, "People don't want to take a chance on them, or they don't have a great work history yet because they're 17." That's where the café comes in. To date it has been staffed by professionals, but soon it will provide paid positions for teen moms in jobs like bookkeeping, customer service, and management.

For Fiedler and coworker Miriam Bloom, who both work for Zoe's Place as well as supervise at the café, the top priority is providing a place where young mothers can learn the skills to provide for themselves and their children. "These girls have dreams and hopes like everybody else," says Fiedler. "What they don't have is the belief that they can realize them."

And then there are the cupcakes. Thanks to pastry chef Kim Testa, "people tell us these are the best cupcakes they've ever eaten," says Fiedler.



LET THEM EAT CAKE: Baker Erin Poli, left, whips up something sweet with pastry chef Kim Testa, in the kitchen of Zoe's Cupcake Café.

PHOTOS: CUPCAKE PHOTOS—COURTESY OF ZOE'S CUPCAKE CAFE; MUSHROOMS—PHOTOS.COM

