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BLUE RIDGE CHRISTIAN NEWS

THE "GOOD NEWS" NEWSPAPER

Ministry Masquerades as Eatery



Nurse Vivian Teos with Vine International's Cindy McCutcheon and van driver. Nurse Vivian has come for wheelchairs and medicines for her orphanage medical clinic.

Tropical Grill is a newcomer to Spruce Pine's host of fine restaurants. After much prayer and hard work, Sam and Claudia Rothman opened for business in mid-April. Located at 198 Oak Avenue (Upper Street), the site offers inside as well as sidewalk dining reminiscent of European or South American cafes. The menu is eclectic with delicious tropical dishes from around the world, ranging from Guatemala, Colombia, Cuba, Asia and country style American cooking. The food is delightful, the ambience joyful and the service excellent. Tropical Grill provides a living for the Rothmans, but their vision is heaven-minded.

Claudia, originally from Barranquilla, Colombia, is a lifelong restaurateur having worked for major food service companies as well as operating her own restaurants. Prior to relocating to Mitchell County she and Sam owned a New York style delicatessen in Fort Lauderdale, Florida. Sam is a South Florida native who graduated from the University of Miami with a degree in architecture. He designed restaurants for many years prior to moving to Bakersville in October, 2001.

The story of how and why this couple came to Mitchell County deserves special treatment in its own right. But, for now, suffice it to say God spoke to these entrepreneurs and confirmed their decision to relocate to the Blue Ridge Mountains. Claudia excitedly explained, "It was October 31, 2001, when Sam and I were in the hills thinking about whether or not to buy property and move here. I remember saying to him, 'How do we name this company? What should it be called?' And then, as if an answer to prayer, the wind swirled around the leaves and they began to sway and almost dance...and it came to me. I said to Sam, 'Look, it's dancing leaves!' So we decided 'Dancing Leaf Mountain' would be a good name.

Sometime later the couple was in bed, at home in Fort Lauderdale, agonizing over the decision – to leave their familiar surroundings and

move to Western North Carolina. Claudia recalls the conversation, "I told Sam, let me think about it and pray for a while then we'll decide. I opened my Bible to a devotional and guess what it was called...DANCING LEAVES! The poem says:

Spirit of the living God,
Surround my dreary world today.
And set my feet to dancing.
The silent song of days gone gray,
A heart that's heavy laden,
Won't have the last, final say.
I know a song of dancing leaves,
They swirl and twirl despite the gray.
Spirit of the living God,
Set my feet to dancing.

by Debra Klingsporn

We knew, without a doubt, that God was telling us to move ahead."

Sam is the son of an Irish Catholic mom, his dad a non-practicing German Jew. He converted to Judaism early-on but without the commitment he would discover later in life. "I became interested in Christianity but didn't want to sacrifice my Jewish heritage. I attended a Messianic Temple for a while, and enjoyed the traditions I'd come to love while growing in a relationship with Jesus," he explained. Claudia was raised Roman Catholic in her native country of Colombia. "I have believed in God, and tried to follow Him all my life," she said. "But it was later in life that I really learned the importance of reading the Bible, studying God's Word and truly following Jesus." After their marriage,

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