



## Haru Aki Café, New School Flair Coming to Storrs Center

March 25, 2013

*(Mansfield, CT)* – There is something magnetic about the hip culture of a university “Main Street” that gets people excited. For friends Ronald Liu, Jessica Chiep, and Thomas Wang, Storrs Center is the ideal location in which to open their new café, Haru Aki. “The transformation of Storrs is an invitation for people to get out and be where the action is,” explained Mr. Liu. “We want to be a part of this excitement with a modern, authentically inspired Japanese café.”

Haru Aki will serve authentic Japanese street fare in a modern restaurant with traditional elements. “This blend of old and new creates a culture that becomes an important part of the dining experience,” says Mr. Liu. “The restaurant will serve tapas – small, carefully prepared dishes that are based on Pan-Asian fusion inspirations. The environment of Haru Aki will be similar to edgy restaurants you would expect to find in major cities such as New York, Chicago, or San Francisco. The food and the environment are equally important to creating an extraordinary experience.” The chief design and architecture firm on this project is Penguin Environmental Design led by Yoko Kawai and Takaya Kurimoto. Yoko holds a Master’s from Harvard University and a Ph.D. from Kobe University. Takaya holds a Master’s from Cornell University.

The three friends are all recent UConn alumni and bring varied backgrounds to their new venture. Ms. Chiep holds a BS in cytogenetics from the School of Agriculture and is leaving her career at Brigham and Women’s Hospital in the pathology department. She brings her freelance web design/development skills to the project. Mr. Wang, an operations expert, comes from a family of serial restaurateurs. His most recent one, Anoho in Middletown, Connecticut, has been enjoying success. Finally, Mr. Liu holds a BS in marketing from the School of Business and currently specializes

in sales training and brand marketing consultation. The common bond between all three, besides being childhood friends from West Hartford, is their appreciation for culture, especially through food.

Haru Aki is expected to open in September of 2013 in the One Royce Circle building of Storrs Center. Specialty items will include hand crafted sashimi salads, house-made curry dumplings, gyū-don, teppanyaki, and okonomiyaki dishes. Haru Aki will also feature appetizers, sushi, build-your-own boba tea, and a variety of smoothies. The café will be open seven days a week and will host monthly Saturday morning workshops. These events will feature different cultural experiences such as sushi-rolling, fresh mochi-tastings, various art techniques, anime screenings, and dumpling-making.

Storrs Center developer Howard Kaufman, Managing Member of LeylandAlliance LLC, is excited about the addition of the Haru Aki Café. “The three operators of Haru Aki are bringing a fun concept to Storrs Center that will fit perfectly into Storrs’ new downtown neighborhood,” says Mr. Kaufman. “Welcome!”

For more information about Haru Aki Café, visit its Facebook page at [facebook.com/HaruAkiCafe](https://facebook.com/HaruAkiCafe) or [haruakicafe.com](http://haruakicafe.com) (coming soon).

#####

*Storrs Center is a mixed-use town center and main street corridor at the crossroads of the Town of Mansfield, Connecticut and the University of Connecticut. Located along Storrs Road adjacent to the University, the Town Hall, the regional high school, and the community center, Storrs Center knits thoughtful architecture, pedestrian-oriented streets, and public spaces into a series of small neighborhoods that make up the new fabric of the town center. Ground floor retail and commercial uses opening onto landscaped sidewalks reinforce traditional street front activity and is supported by residences above and shared community spaces. Storrs Center combines retail, restaurant, and office uses with residential apartments.*

**[www.storrscenter.com](http://www.storrscenter.com)**