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## It's always time for ice cream

By **Laura Crimaldi**/ News Staff Writer

Dad licked his fingers. Daughter pushed herself away from the table and put her hand to her stomach in satisfaction. Mom simply exclaimed, "It's unbelievable." Repeatedly.

And when the last morsel of cake batter ice cream in a waffle bowl with chocolate and sprinkles had melted away in their mouths, the Vono family tried their own hand at creating confectionary delights yesterday at the grand opening of Cold Stone Creamery on Rte. 9. Mary Vono dreamed up the flavor Tropical Island -- banana ice cream, pineapple and coconut.

Her daughter Sara, 9, turned to her favorite comfort food, blueberry pie, for inspiration and came up with a mix of cake batter, sugar crystals, vanilla crust and blueberries.

Stephen Vono, a former bartender, blended egg nog, chocolate chips and candy canes for an invention he called "Deck the Halls."

Each wrote down the name and ingredients for their ice cream creations on cards and submitted them to the store as part of a contest that would yield the winner a month's supply of the ice cream and the honor of having their picture hung up in the store next to their very own flavor. But don't underestimate the tastiness of the Cold Stone originals.

"It tastes like cake batter. It's amazing. It tastes like you're eating vanilla cake only better," said Mary Vono of Framingham as she polished off an ice cream breakfast.

The ice cream shop at The Crossings at White's Corner, a new retail plaza on Rte. 9 in Southborough, is the first of five franchisees Mike and Lori Fays of Ashland plan to open in the MetroWest region.

To fete their opening, the Fays donated half of the opening day's proceeds to the Southborough Organization for Schools who raised some additional money at the store by holding a raffle.

"It's just exciting to have a store in Southborough that where we will be able to gather in the summer and in the evenings," said Lauren Marks, president of SOS.

Cold Stone Creamery employs a mix-in concept made popular by Steve Herrell, founder of Steve's Ice Cream in Somerville, whereby workers blend premium ice cream made daily on the premises with a variety of ingredients.

Candy, fruit, nuts and traditional ice cream toppings are available to mixed in on top of a slab of granite chilled to 16 degrees. Customers can choose their own concoctions from a menu or order up combinations created by the company.

"It's an exciting time. You open up your own business and it's an anxious time as well," said Mike Fays. "We're very excited to be involved in the town. We have a lot of students working here mostly from the local high schools."

The couple first got hooked on the ice cream last February when they visited a shop while visiting family in Florida. They hope to open their next locations in Marlborough or Natick.

That's good news for the Vano family, who definitely plans to taste again.

"I'm like amazed at how good it is," Mary Vano said.