

Between Us Tea Room

Karen Holbrook, Co-Owner



Since last August, people have been telling Karen Holbrook and her sister, Renita Bayliss, that their spot at 802 South Friendswood Drive is the closest they have felt to being back home in the United Kingdom. To Karen and Renita's surprise, the comment comes from more men than women, considering they are talking about the Between Us Tea Room, where the original menu has evolved to include heartier meals.

Karen had often entertained in her home during her previous 22 years as a Friendswood resident, but the "Live Here, Work Here" restaurant is a long way from her prior career in the insurance industry. She had never professionally served someone as much as a glass of water before opening the Between Us Tea Room.

Now she manages the midday restaurant, open six days (and nights) a week and it morphs into a

wine café with an expanded menu after 5 p.m. When the weather is right in the evening, comfortable outdoor seating is available.

Karen comes from a family of seven kids who all ended up in separate orphanages early on. About twenty years ago she reunited with Renita. "Today, I doubt you could find closer siblings," Karen said. "We believe that our tea room is a testament to that closeness."

Karen and Renita's passion to open Between Us Tea Room began with searching for an existing older house to convert into a commercial use. They reached out to City staff to help find space in Friendswood for their start-up. They liked the downtown area and decided that with good planning and creativity, their location within

new construction of a Tannos II commercial center next to Sonic really works. "There are many places for people to eat nearby in Friendswood. We are grateful that the ones who try us once, keep coming back. More than 95 percent of our guests are repeat customers," Karen said.



Karen gives much of the credit to her employees—both family and otherwise. "I feel like being able to employ 20 people is a way to 'give back' to the Friendswood community that I love," she said.



"The growth of the business has been phenomenal. We have guests from all surrounding areas and some as far as fifty miles away," said Karen. Because she is a "Live Here, Work Here" business, her commute is only six minutes.