

HANNA CITY — Ron Gulley looked at some huge metal shipping containers and saw a way to build a business.

Gourmet coffees, exotic teas, nitro-infused coffee – all in a trendy coffee shop for rural, small-town Hanna City.

"What else would you call a coffee shop made out of metal crates?" Gulley said. "The Coffee Can."

Construction is well underway at The Coffee Can on Farmington Road, right in the middle of Hanna City's business row, the site of a former gas station and across the street from nearby Gil's Supper Club.

Gulley, 59, posted a video tour of the place recently.

The Orion native, who spent years in the HVAC business, is partnering with Matt Fick of Morton and Justin Ball of Mapleton, and they plan to open The Coffee Can in the spring.

The shop will have a drive-thru and offer 12 to 17 gourmet coffee varieties. Teas will be on the menu, as will be nitro-infused coffee and breakfast items like egg sandwiches, croissants and more.

There will be indoor seating for customers as well and a second-story room that can be rented for private gatherings. The structure will be topped off with a second-story deck for customers who want to relax outdoors.

Store hours will be 5 a.m. to 7 p.m. Monday through Friday. Gulley hopes to catch substantial commuter traffic from Farmington, Canton and small towns all along Farmington Road going to and from Peoria. And the shop is an easy drive for folks living in Kickapoo, Brimfield and Elmwood, too.

Gulley plans Saturday hours as well, and might add Sunday hours if traffic warrants.

"When I would get off work in the HVAC business, everyone would go out to a bar," Gulley said. "I would go to a coffee shop, instead. Everyone in a coffee shop always seems happy. I liked that."

Gulley and Ball own Lakeshore Plaza and some apartment units in Hanna City.

"I would look at that unused lot and think, 'How good would it be if I put a small coffee shop there?' " Gulley said.

The city made the lot available, but Gulley realized it was too small. So he bought the house that was next to it, tore it down and expanded the lot for The Coffee Can.

"We ran into construction delays," Gulley said. "Digging the foundation, we ran into storage tanks from the old gas

station and had to get those removed. Then COVID hit and it was impossible to get material and equipment for a while."

But he found his main material source – and what will give The Coffee Can its unique look – laying in a farmer's field.

"About an hour west from here, out in the middle of a cornfield," Gulley said. "The shipping crates were sitting there, so I bought them."

They were brought to the site, 13 long, rectangular metal shipping containers; some stacked, some cut into pieces to make the walls.

There is a towering flag pole with a huge American flag on the site, which Gulley says is a salute to military veterans, police, fire and all first-responders.

"The whole thing was going to start out as one container, but I couldn't get enough room for cars in there," Gulley said. "We did a re-development deal with Hanna City; the mayor, Fred Winterroth, has been so supportive and helpful in it.

"I got a bunch of those shipping containers to the site and we were under way."

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