

Food market caters to Asian community

By Mengqi Jiang

“Need any help?” are the first words a customer hears as she walks into LiMing’s Global Mart.

Zulin Yang, the store’s general manager, starts working around 9 a.m. almost every day with over 30 Asian employees.

“I usually work 13 hours on weekdays and 14 hours on weekends,” he said.

Yang said his work includes rearranging goods on shelves, checking food quality and answering customers’ questions.

“A manager needs to be familiar with each part of the operation of the mart: replenishment of the goods, food quality checking, pricing and most importantly, keeping connections with customers,” he said.

LiMing’s Global Mart, located at 3400 Westgate Drive in Durham, opened in February 2011.

Yang said students from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and Duke University constitute a major part of their customers.

“I want customers to feel at home when they do shopping at LiMing.” — Zulin Yang, the store’s general manager

Tao Tang, a first-year doctoral student in Earth and Ocean Sciences at Duke, said he shops LiMing once a week.

“I cook Chinese dishes at home,” Tang said. “Some ingredients and sauces are only available in LiMing, not at Kroger or Whole Foods.”

He said LiMing improved his quality of life by allowing him to have tastier dishes at home.

“I want customers to feel at home when they do shopping at LiMing,” Yang said.

He said the mart offers customized fish, seafood and meat in addition to fresh groceries.

“We can have meat mashed, chop ribs into pieces and process fish as customers like,” Yang said.

Chapel Hill resident Leslie Williams



Zulin Yang, the general manager of LiMing’s Global Mart, introduces a variety of fish to customers. The store offers Asian food products, fresh groceries, seafood and meats. (Staff photo by Mengqi Jiang)

said the selection of fish at LiMing is better than anywhere else.

“I came for fish today because I am making a French fish soup,” she said.

Williams said she loved LiMing and it exposed her to other cuisines, cultures and cooking methods.

“It’s like getting to go to another country,” she said. “Imagine that it must be the same for people who come from another country and go to American grocery stores.”

Yang said most of the customers are Asians but there is a trend in which more Caucasians, African-Americans and Latinos like to do shopping at LiMing’s Global Mart as well.

Durham residents Frank Fletcher and Mary Tchamkina moved from New York City to Durham last August. They visit LiMing weekly. Tchamkina said she cooks Asian food more often than her friends do but it is not a weekly habit.

Fletcher said he goes to LiMing because he can get products, such as miso, different dressings and peanut oil, that he can’t get anywhere else.

Tchamkina said she loves LiMing because she can get products that are similar to those found in New York’s Chinatown.

“We’ve been also enjoying the bak-

ery,” she said. “That’s something we miss from New York.”

Yang said the happiest moment was hearing compliments about the freshness of the food and the helpfulness of the employees. He said he also likes to make friends with customers.

But customers are not always friendly and nice, he said.

“It was inevitable to deal with fastidious and irresponsible customers and thieves as well,” he said. “What you could do is reason with them with patience.”

**For more information
Visit LiMing’s Global Mart’s
website or call (919) 401-5212.
LiMing’s Global Mart is open
from 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. every day.**

He said it is worth dedicating time and energy to making LiMing better because his enthusiasm won him his fiancée.

“The biggest reward of working at LiMing is that I got a chance to meet her,” Yang said. “Now she is my fiancée.”

Some interviews were conducted in Chinese. Direct quotes were translated from Chinese to English.