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**HEADLINE ELEMENTS:**

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1 69A finds new digs at 134 Elliot

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2 For now, the name will stay the same

#####END SUBHED#####

3 TEXT BODY:

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4 Days before the lease was to run out at 69A Elliot Street,  
5 the community space there known by its address has found a  
6 new home at 134 Elliot St.

7 And it's bigger. And better. And cheaper.

8 "It's awesome," says Coordinator Lisa Marie, and you can  
9 see her smiling through the phone. "It's humongous and amazing  
10 and beautiful."

11           The new space is owned by dermatologist Dr. Rebecca  
12        Jones. Her practice is in a building where she rents space across  
13        the parking lot.

14           "I have a lot of friends who are very engaged in  
15        supporting the community and they had told me about 69A, and  
16        I just feel like things are so hard for everybody and the more  
17        support we can give our community, the better, so I figured it was  
18        something I can do," Jones tells The Commons of her decision to  
19        rent the space.

20           A year ago, artist Katie Bachler and her husband, Scott  
21        Berzofsky, took out a one-year lease at 69A Elliot to "make a  
22        community space."

23           Bachler and Berzofsky tapped into their savings to do so  
24        in the aftermath of the national election and last year's  
25        contentious local debate over "acceptable community conduct."

26           Without knowing the exact contours of how the space  
27        would actually be used, the former owners of Avenue Grocery  
28        did know they wanted to restore a community gathering place in  
29        the same spirit of the community convenience store that they  
30        briefly ran on Western Avenue in 2017 and 2018.

31           Amid the final dismantling of the state's motel program in  
32        July for those who were unsheltered and the already acute  
33        homelessness epidemic in the region, 69A Elliot Street became a  
34        safe space for all, offering free coffee, tea, water, wi-fi access,  
35        various gear and supplies (including tents, sleeping bags,  
36        flashlights, and clothing), restrooms, music, and a social milieu.

37           Marie is over the moon at how things have resolved  
38        since she learned the center would have to relocate.

39           "It was really nice in our other space, but we had  
40        outgrown it a while ago," she says. "Rebecca was kind enough to  
41        let us be here, and it's awesome."

42           The center is on the first floor at 134 Elliot, in the space  
43        formerly occupied by the Restless Rooster restaurant.

44           Many people have suggested new names for the space,  
45        but Marie says for now it will remain the same.

46            "For right now we're going to keep it as 69A," she says  
47    with a smile. "But someone today said, 'just put a plus after it.' So  
48    lots of people have suggestions and we're looking at them all."

49            In the larger area, the group will have more room to do  
50    new things, and Marie is planning to start a men's recovery group  
51    soon and later, a women's recovery group.

52            "We're going to have areas so we can have more private  
53    conversations if needed, and an area for trainings. Today, we had  
54    certified CPR training here," she says.

55            Folks can go to the center to get warm, eat, chat, get hot  
56    coffee or hot chocolate, and get some warm clothing.

57            Marie says the center is still gearing up for two meals a  
58    day so they will probably serve only lunch only for now, adding  
59    breakfast later. They're also not using the space's stove because  
60    most food is brought in cooked, "which is amazing," Marie says.

61            Loaves & Fishes brings food Tuesdays and Fridays and  
62    others do so throughout the week but hot cooked meals are  
63    welcome any time.

64            Although the center serves from 70 to 130 people daily,  
65    Marie says it's "great to have even one pan for about 30, 35."

66            The center is open 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., Monday through  
67    Friday. If you'd like to offer a hot meal, call or text 413-418-8227.

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BIO/COATTAIL:

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