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Rebecca Dravis

Pharmacy Integrates Customer Care, Medicine

LENOX, MA: When Larry Browne decided he wanted to open a pharmacy, his first tool was not a bankbook or a real estate guide.

It was a compass.

Sitting in his home in Longmeadow, he marked a circle that would be within an hour's drive of his home, then set about to find the perfect place within his parameters.

He found it in Lenox.

Browne bought the former Lenox Village Pharmacy on Walker Street two years ago, added the word "integrative" to the name seven months ago and is in the process of turning what used to be a fairly ordinary establishment into something he hopes will be extraordinary.

There's the line of natural products, from makeup to vitamins, that greets people as they enter, and there's the "fun" table that features an assortment of colorful - and unexpected - French kitchen gadgets, making the shop feel like anything but a typical pharmacy.

When Browne bought it, however, it did.

"If you didn't have a headache or you didn't need a Band-Aid, you didn't come in here," he said Friday.

He didn't want to come right in and change everything, so for the first year, he swept the floors and observed to get a feel for the market.

"I had an idea what my strategy was," he said.

Last year, he started implementing that strategy.

Physically, the shop changed. The old metal shelves were replaced with wood, giving it

a warmer feel. The area behind the counter where the pharmacists worked was brought down to floor level, providing customers with more access. The entire shop was opened up and the clutter was removed, making the space easier to navigate.

More importantly, though, the shop changed philosophically – all coming back to the word Browne added to the name.

From the “compounding” that goes on in the pharmacy (the process of mixing and personalizing medication beyond what’s commercially available, something not done in too many places) to the new “Pre-Paks®” being marketed (medicine packages customized by dose for each patient) to the line of organic and natural nutritionals, makeup and even pet food, it’s all about integrating into a marketing plan the needs of customers who want more than, well, bandages and Tylenol.

“There’s a whole host of people who are interested in more than that,” Browne said. “Who represents that segment?”

He has answered his own question with the shop, which sits in a large, rented space on the first floor of the old Curtis Hotel. He employs about 20 full- and part-time people, including cashiers, drivers, pharmacy assistants and three pharmacists.

One of those pharmacists is Dan Walczyk, who owned the shop for eight years before selling it to Browne.

Walczyk is one of the few pharmacists in the state trained to practice compounding, and he stayed on to devote more time to that, his passion. A Pittsfield native, he said he has enjoyed the transition from owner to employee.

“I really like working with Larry,” he said. “He and I have the same vision.”


The main focus of that vision is the customers. Both Browne and Walczyk are pleased when they hear positive feedback from the public—be it from locals or visiting tourists, both of which the pharmacy aims to serve.

“They walk in and there’s all kinds of ‘oohs’ and ‘aahs,’” Walczyk said.

Browne is proud to tell the story of an older gentleman who came in for a prescription and approached him.

“I just want to tell you what a great looking pharmacy you have,” Browne said the man told him.

“It was kind of like, ‘Yes!’” he said, pumping his fist.



Customers in the store Friday likewise seemed pleased. Paula Bradway of Framingham had one word to describe the pharmacy:

“Darling.”

Bradway and her family had just purchased something cool to drink on a warm August day on their way to a local theater performance. Standing outside the pharmacy, she said she was impressed with what was inside of it.

“I think he’s got a go,” she said.

Lenox Village Integrative Pharmacy, 5 Walker St., is open Monday through Friday, 9 a.m.-6 p.m., Saturday 9 a.m.-5 p.m. and Sunday 10 a.m.-2 p.m. Call 413-637-4103 or visit www.healthylivingcenteronline.com. ■