

Pharmacy's a family affair

By Carolyn DeMarco
staff writer

If you're looking for the old-fashioned, wooden stick Q-Tips or Balmex ointment or the Craig Martin toothpaste your mother bought when you were a child, drive right on by the drug store chains. They probably don't stock those items. Very few people use them today.

And if you need to rent crutches or convalescent aids, forget about the television-advertised mega stores. There's no profit in the service. Free delivery by the big stores? Not likely.

If you want service, says 66-year-old pharmacist Jerry Efros, you want an independent pharmacist, not a mega-store or family-owned business. Like the Efros Drugs in West Bloomfield, Southfield and Farmington Hills managed by Efros and his sons — Howard, 41, David, 37, and Barry, 33.

Like their father before them, all are Wayne State University School of Pharmacy graduates. And all three started working in the family business at 11 or 12 years of age, putting the newspapers together. One renegade brother, Arthur, 39, became a physician instead, but even he chose the WSU route.

Jerry Efros sold the store at 10 Mile and Greenfield, but the Efros name will remain on the building and the elder Efros will remain on the job in an advisory capacity. The three sons, who all have invested into the company, divide their time between the other two outlets.

"The drug stores are open 365 days a year," family spokesman David Efros said, "and there's always a pharmacist on duty. Ninety percent of the time it's an Efros."

THE DRUG STORE business has changed since Efros Drugs was founded 40 years ago, Jerry said. "It's become less fun. The bottom line is profit and nobody is interested in service."

Jerry Efros began his drug store at Nine Mile and Geneva in Oak Park in 1949. Personalized service was a Hallmark party in the parking lot for the neighborhood children with a rented clown and go-rilla to entertain.

"We gave away cotton candy and

if the wind blew the wrong way, the kids were covered with it," Efros said. "Some of my older customers still bring that up today."

"The average customer in the chain store is just a number to the help," he said. "If we hire someone who has worked in one we have to de-Perry or de-Arbor them. When someone asks them where something is they stand there and point if they look up. We teach them to take them to the product."

A decade after the founding, in 1959, Efros moved to larger headquarters in Southfield. The Orchard Mall store was opened in 1973 and the Muirwood Square store in 1980.

Many of the customers, like Vera Gell of Farmington Hills, have followed Efros from Oak Park to Southfield and beyond. Gell happened in on an interview with the pharmacist family last week in the West Bloomfield store.

"TO SHOP AT at Arbor or Perry is sterile," Gell said. "Efros has the variety a chain doesn't have. Things like wooden stick Q-Tips that you can't get anywhere."

The most significant difference in the independent vs. chain, David said, is the personalized service.

"I spent 20 minutes yesterday talking to a woman about her baby's formula and the regimen the doctor prescribed. It didn't sound right to her. I reassured her that it's something she should do. She can't get — she wouldn't even think to ask — at a chain. The pharmacist is behind the glass or an imaginary wall."

The prices, David said, are comparable to a chain's.

"We've been in business overall for 40 years. We haven't stayed here without having competitive prices."

EFROS DELIVERS daily to area senior citizens, several times a day to Fleischmann Residence in West Bloomfield, Baptist Manor in Farmington Hills and McDonnell Towers in Southfield.

"In an emergency we'll deliver anywhere," David said, "eight to 10 miles away. That's a lot considering we'll pass six drug stores in between. That's something you can't get at the chains. And there's no charge for delivery."

"One customer needed an antibiotic



David (left), Barry and Howard Efros followed their father, Jerry, into Wayne State University's School of Pharmacy and then into the family drug store.

he delivered and asked us if we'd mind picking up her dinner at Rikshaw. That happens. We've had unbelievable requests. Fortunately Rikshaw now delivers."

While the independent pharmacist is fading from sight, "they're surviving because of the personalized service," David said.

"We're like the doctors in small towns. When people have a medical problem they call us first. They don't want to bother their doctor. There's nothing wrong with that. That's what we want to do."

THE EFROSES have no immediate plans of expanding.

"We'd be spreading ourselves thin and we'd lose that personalized service. We want to continue to serve customers in the way we want to serve them."

Those plans may change next year when the oldest children of the next generation — Howard's son, Michael, and David's daughter, Michelle — both turn 12.

"If they want to they'll be in here putting together newspapers," Jerry said.

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Gardeners win grant

Hill & Dale Garden Club accepted a \$250 Community Award Grant from F & M Distributors Inc., a Detroit-based chain of health and beauty aids and household supplies super stores.

The grant, presented as part of activities marking the latest F & M store opening in Farmington, will be used to help finance the organization's Children Garden project at Michigan State University.

The grant presentation came at an October membership meeting, which the club hoped to welcome F & M locally. Dominic Zani, vice president of human resources of the 70-store company, presented the grant to club president Jean Moran.

IN THANKING the members for welcoming F & M locally, Zani said the 34-year-old company and the Hill

& Dale Garden Club share a tradition of civic service and community involvement.

"Like you, F & M believes in being an active part of the community," Zani told the group.

"Back in the '50s, F & M started in Detroit as a small vitamin store owned by Fred and Margaret Cohen. We've grown to be a leading company in our industry but F & M has never forgotten its roots or its basic beliefs. We place a high priority in supporting worthy organizations by contributing to projects they sponsor in communities where F & M stores are, or will be located."

In other locales, previous F & M Community Award Grants have been used to support projects ranging from scholarships to financing the costs of sending disadvantaged children to summer camps.

Michigan Guild moves holiday show to OCC

The Michigan Guild presents its annual holiday showcase of art and fine crafts from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Sunday, Dec. 9 and from noon to 6 p.m. Saturday, Dec. 10 in Oakland Community College on Orchard Lake Road at I-696 in Farmington Hills.

Traditionally a seasonal favorite, the Holiday Art Fair offers an extensive range of original, decorative, functional and fine art suitable for holiday giving. This year, work by 130 of the finest professional artists and craftspeople from 16 states will be exhibited.

Among the featured Michigan, Ohio and Illinois artists are the sometimes serious and sometimes whimsical prints of Allen Reid of Ann Arbor, the exquisite porcelain dolls of Beverly Tew of Dayton Plains, wearable leather by Keith McClintock of Garrettsville, Ohio, life-like wood nature sculptures from Michael Van Houten of Holland, the sparkling glass works by Peter Patterson of Riverwoods, Ill., and award winning raku pottery by Steve Olaszewski of Ann Arbor.

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at the Holiday Imagination Station by making cards or ornaments for taking home or for holiday giving. Admission to the Holiday Art Fair is \$3 or \$2 for seniors. Children, 12 and under, are free. Parking is free in the lots near H-Building between Orchard Lake Road and Farmington Road near I-696.

The Michigan Guild is a non-profit artist service organization with 1,500 members throughout the nation. In addition to the Holiday Art Fair, the Michigan Guild also sponsors the Summer Art Fair, the largest of three Ann Arbor Art Fairs, and the Autumn Art Fair at Domino's Farms in Ann Arbor.

club circuit

AMERICAN LEGION, Groves-Walker Unit 346, meets at 7:30 p.m. tonight, in the post home, 31775 Grand River.

WESTSIDE SINGLES meet for a dance party at 8 p.m. Friday in Roma's of Livonia. Schoolcraft Service Drive west of Inkster. Admission is \$4 at the door. The hot line number is 562-3160.

DAUGHTERS OF THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION, Extra Parker Chapter, meet at 12:30 p.m. Friday in the Royal Oak home of Mary Ellen Byrne. Joanne Brooks, a pianist from Farmington Hills, will be one of the artists furnishing the music for the holiday program.

Delegates to the National DAR

Continental Congress, scheduled for Paris in Washington DC, will be elected.

WEST POINT SOCIETY OF MICHIGAN is hosting an Army-Navy game football party Dec. 9. All service academy graduates interested in attending are invited to call Glenn Nenniger, 525-2565.

BUSINESS AND PROFESSIONAL WOMEN, Farmington Chapter, meet at 6:15 p.m. Tuesday, Dec. 12 in The Burgs Works, 29335 Orchard Lake Road.

Speaker for the evening is Nancy Reale of Womencenter, Oakland Community College, who will tell about the services Womencenter offers.

Those interested in attending the meeting should call Betty Brown, 522-4484, or Karen Leppanen, 473-0512, on or before Dec. 11.

DAUGHTERS OF THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION, Three Flags

Chapter, meet at noon Monday, Dec. 11 in the Birmingham home of Vicki Back. Co-hostesses for the day are Sally Kirsten and Mary Shaw, both of Farmington Hills.

Speaker for the day is Ellie Crosby, a collector of dolls with historical significance. Her topic is "A Century of American History as Seen Through the Eyes of Dolls."

AUXILIARY TO THE SALVATION ARMY, Metro Detroit, meet at 10 a.m. Monday, Dec. 11 in the chapel of the Royal Oak Citadel, 3052 N. Main Street, Royal Oak.

A short business meeting will be followed by a musical program given by Junior League of Birmingham Chorus, and then the traditional Holiday Bake Sale.

Participants bring a sandwich. Beverage and dessert is provided.

Guests are always welcome. Inquiries are taken by Maggie Alsesee, 540-8467.

FARMINGTON AREA ASSOCIATION OF RETIRED SCHOOL PER-

SONNEL meet at 11:30 a.m. Tuesday, Dec. 12 in Room 15, Shiawassee School, Shiawassee between Orchard Lake Road and Middlebelt.

Participants should bring a dish to share for a potluck lunch and their own table service. Music for the afternoon is provided by "Lloyd Smith and Friends."

Those wishing to share in a gift exchange are asked to bring a \$2 gift. Participants can also bring non-perishable foods that will be given to the Salvation Army for distribution.

DAUGHTERS OF THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION, Quakertown Chapter, meet at noon Tuesday, Dec. 12 for lunch in the Northville home of Lucile Fairchild.

Members will bring an item with them that has special personal meaning and two dozen cookies for a cookie exchange.

PROFESSIONAL WOMEN IN SALES meets at 6 p.m. Tuesday, Dec. 12 in Fox & Hounds, 1560 Wood-

ward, Bloomfield Hills.

Speaker for the evening is Auleen Jarret. Her topic is "Personal Assault Crime Avoidance and Survival."

Reservations are \$16 for members or \$20 for guests. Reservations are taken by the association, 473-2253.

WELCOME WAGON CLUB of Farmington and Farmington Hills, invites women who are newcomers to the area to a holiday welcome coffee at 10 a.m. Wednesday, Dec. 13 in the home of one of its members. Purpose of the meeting is to tell about club membership and the many diverse activity groups that function within the organization.

Those attending may bring wrapped gifts for donation to the local Adopt-A-Family holiday program.

Reservations are taken by Charlotte Leicht, 851-2137.

BETHANY NORTHWEST, a Catholic social club for divorced, sepa-

rated and widowed, meet at 8 p.m. Wednesday, Dec. 13 in Our Lady of Sorrows Church social hall, 23615 Power Road, corner of Shiawassee. Program for the evening is the group's annual white elephant sale and potluck dinner. Admission is \$4, or a dish to pass.

FARMINGTON NEIGHBORS CLUB meets for lunch at noon Wednesday, Dec. 20 in Glen Oaks Country Club. Program for the afternoon is furnished by the Mercysaires, Mercy High School's choral group, under the direction of Larry Tevens.

Reservations must be made by 4 p.m. Friday, Dec. 15 with Mary Ann McHugh, 477-6253, or Korothy Kraft, 553-7226.

All club news and announcements for this column are to be addressed to: Club Circuit, Farmington Observer, 33203 Grand River, Farmington 48024. The information must arrive before noon on the Monday before Thursday publication.

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