

Couple's flour blossoms in downtown bakery

There very well may be a new "rising" star on the downtown Farmington business scene, emerging from within the walls of one of the city's oldest retail mainstays.

Becky Burns and her husband, Jeff Pavlik, recently took over ownership of the Farmington Bakery on Grand River east of Farmington Road and already are making changes to personalize the place. Some things are the same; they retained the incumbent baker, Novetta Frjuckic. But tasty transformations also are under way. Behind the counter of pastries, sandwiches and cold beverages is a giant mural of baked goods, recently painted by Jeff's brother, Chris Pavlik, and Susan Melrican, replacing what had been a stark white wall. The rest of the interior was painted "What I like to call honey wheat," joked Burns during a recent afternoon lull.

There will be more focaccia and Persian breads. Burns said customers with ideas on how to improve the bakery (sugar-free treats, etc.) are invited to submit them onto a "running suggestion list. We haven't been able to try much of it, but in the next couple months maybe we will."

Stacks of complimentary concert tickets line the top of the counter. And the new owners plan on soon incorporating a "serve-yourself" bar of flavored coffees.

"We want to personalize it and make it our business," said the 27-year-old Burns, who just left a journalism job to focus on the business.

But she emphasized that the coffee bar isn't being put in as a ploy to pull business from Starbucks Coffee, which opened a couple months ago in the Downtown Farmington Center, just across Grand River from the bakery.

"We don't feel we're competing with Starbucks," Burns said. "We're not a coffee shop. We're in the business of baked goods."

And that's just fine with one of the regulars, Farmington resident Glenn Ramaker, who stopped by to purchase some blueberry and cherry scones.

"It's always been good, and it still is," Ramaker said. "We like fresh stuff and homemade stuff."

He turned toward the bread mural and liked the new look. "Makes you think of being on the farm."

Farm settings might be great. But Burns and Pavlik couldn't be happier to open their small business in a relatively small downtown.



All smiles: Becky Burns, a former journalist, is working with husband Jeff Pavlik (not pictured) in putting their own recipe for success in the Farmington Bakery, which has been a mainstay in downtown. Her mother, Mary Lou Burns, has been helping her daughter and son-in-law in the transition.

"You get to know everybody," Burns explained. "You get to meet the locals."

Besides, Burns said she always grew up in or around a downtown, and her family seemingly always had a small business going — whether a frozen custard store in Southfield or a party store in Fenton.

So, a bakery in downtown Farmington fit the bill perfectly, combining Burns' customer-friendly skills with her husband's cooking and baking abilities. They took over the store in May from Drasko and Sonja Mitrikecki, who ran it for about seven years.

"We couldn't imagine being in a strip mall along Evergreen Road," Burns said. "... I think the loca-

tion is great. I love being in downtown. I love seeing some of the same people every day. We're excited about being active and involved in the community."

They hope to put down some roots in town, too, looking for an apartment within walking distance of the bakery.

The sweet smell inside Farmington Bakery, they hope, will turn into the sweet smell of success. "I think we'll be here for a long time," Burns noted.

If their business card slogan — "We Knead to Please" — is any indication, they probably are on their way.

Meanwhile, Farmington City Manager Frank

Lauff is among those wishing the new owners well.

"The Farmington Bakery is kind of a landmark down there," Lauff said. "And certainly, the city is happy to see someone come in and continue that tradition."

Burns and Pavlik plan on emphasizing that tradition as much as the loaves of bread and fruit-filled muffins.

"My husband is a historian by trade," Becky said. "He's hoping to find out more about the history of this place and incorporate it."

Farmington Bakery is located at 33250 Grand River. For more information, call (248) 442-2360.

Bikini switch doesn't suit Miss Michigan contestant

Four of the top five contestants — six of the top 10 — at last weekend's Miss Michigan Scholarship Program in Muskegon wore two-piece bathing suits. Jennifer Hoemke did not.



Jennifer Hoemke

But the 24-year-old Hoemke, who competed at the pageant as 1997 Miss Farmington-Farmington Hills, wasn't blaming her unsuccessful title try on her choice of swimwear. At least not openly.

"That's hard to say," said Hoemke, a top-10 finisher, about whether judges gave higher scores to bikini-wearing contestants. "Four of the top five wore two-piece (swimsuits). Looking at it that way is a good guess."

The winning contestant, Livonia's Laura Welling, did wear a bikini.

It was the first time the Miss Michigan program gave contestants a choice of wearing one- or two-piece bathing suits.

Welling competed in the Miss Farmington pageant several years ago.

"I'm really, really happy for her," said Hoemke about Welling's victory. "She worked very, very hard."

Hoemke said she enjoyed the experience, despite the outcome.

"I made a lot of very good friends," Hoemke said. "Overall, it was a fantastic week. It's a once-in-a-lifetime experience, and I wouldn't trade it for anything..."

"That wasn't the path my life was supposed to go. I'm not bitter."

Losing her last chance to be Miss Michigan (because of her age she now is ineligible to compete) wasn't as disappointing as not capturing the pageant's community service award — which Hoemke felt she deserved.

The honor went to Miss Redford Township Annette Hohl, who was the 1996 Miss Farmington-Farmington Hills.

"It was heartbreaking," Hoemke said. "That, to me, was very disappointing. I worked very hard this year."

Hoemke racked up numerous personal appearances during her year as Miss Farmington-Farm-

ington Hills, and also initiated a number of community service projects.

Most recently, she began "Pop a Top So Dialysis Won't Stop," a fund-raiser for Children's Hospital's kidney dialysis unit. She is urging people to collect beverage top tabs and drop them off at the William Costick Activities Center.

The pure aluminum tabs are bought by a Livonia company, which melts them down and pays 40-47 cents per pound. Proceeds from the tab sales are sent to Children's Hospital in Detroit to help defray patient costs and fund field trips.

According to Ginny Morris, executive director of the Miss Farmington-Farmington Hills pageant (which in July becomes the Miss Farmington-Oakland County Scholarship Pageant) the state competition was "a beautiful show, and Jennifer did a fantastic job."

But Morris didn't put much stock in the fact the top contestants wore two-piece suits.

"I don't think you can see any more in a two-piece suit than a one-piece as far as being physically fit," Morris said.

intentions. But what if that doesn't happen?

"Then they can't use those organs," said Hoemke, who competed June 18-20 in the Miss Michigan Scholarship Program in Muskegon. "They go to waste."

It is why she supports "notifying as many people as you can within your family" about organ donation. "It's the gift of life."

But she also supports another related cause — for people to donate organs after they die. Unfortunately, although 85 percent of the American population supports organ donation, only about one third of the organs supposedly out there are being donated.

There is a reason. The law requires the donor to notify two family members about his or her

public is invited to attend and enjoy a brief reception afterwards.

Postal carrier Deborah Read, Garry Homocyn and Sue Krueger spearheaded the construction efforts of the recently completed garden.

A garden plaque honoring former Farmington Post Office custodian Mark Shinde — a 29-year employee who died of brain cancer on his 50th birthday, Dec. 24, 1997 — will be presented by Farmington Postmaster Marlene Bowers as part of the ceremony.

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Post office dedicates memorial garden Friday

A memorial garden honoring Farmington and Farmington Hills postal employees and former employees who have passed away will be dedicated at 10 a.m. Friday, June 26, at the Farmington Main Post Office, 32455 W. 12 Mile Road. The