

f/Stop owner moves on to compassionate endeavor

By CARA PLOWMAN
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A small photography shop in Farmington Hills will close its doors Aug. 29 unless a buyer is found, said owner Wayne Loder.

Loder has owned f/Stop at its current location on Grand River at Haggerty Road for 14 years. Before that, the store was in Novi for nine years.

Since December, Loder and his wife, Pat, have known they would leave the camera store behind and increase their involvement with The Compassionate Friends, a nonprofit organization. TCF, a support group for families dealing with the death of a child, has 600 chapters in the U.S. and 26 other countries.

The couple became involved with the group soon after their two children, Stephanie, 8, and Stephen, 5, died in a car accident 10 years ago.

"Most people don't want to talk about your children who have died," Loder said, adding that he and his wife grew

distant from some of their friends after the accident. "The group was really a lifesaver for us."

Since then, they have kept close ties with the organization, and Loder said he intends to increase his role. His wife was appointed full-time executive director in March, and he was hired to be the public awareness coordinator, starting Aug. 1.

For many years, the couple edited two TCF newsletters, and they also published a national, award-winning magazine for the organization in 1998. In addition, they started the Commerce Township chapter of TCF in 1993.

Only Alcoholics Anonymous has more members nationally than TCF, Loder said.

The Loders have rebuilt their family since the accident in 1991 and now have two children, Chris, 8, and Katie, 7.

f/Stop's lease ends this year, and Loder said he would have had to renew it for five more years. Luckily, the job offer from TCF came along at just the right time, and the decision to leave the store

behind was cemented, he added.

A number of people have shown interest in purchasing the store as it is, Loder said. He feels confident that f/Stop won't have to close permanently.

"We don't want to abandon the community," he said, adding that f/Stop is the only camera store in the area. "It's been very good to us. We have many loyal customers."

The store handles camera sales and repairs, film processing, passport and identification pictures, sells photography equipment and is Michigan's largest Kodak Processing Lab dealer. Last year, Kodak declared the store the eighth largest dealer in the nation, Loder said.

Loder said he doesn't plan to take any time off after he leaves the store. "In bereavement, there is no time off, because children die all the time."

He added that the new job will give him more time with his family. "I think what I'll miss most are the friends I've made here... You get to know your customers. They get to know you."



STAFF PHOTO BY BILL BREKLER

Moving on: f/Stop owner Wayne Loder says he'll miss his customers, who have become his friends during the 24 years he's been in business. Loder has taken a job with Compassionate Friends, an organization for parents who have lost children.



Eagle: Paul Koning, valedictorian in the Clarenceville High class of 2001, received the rank of Eagle, Scouting's highest rank. He was honored at a ceremony June 3. He is pictured wearing a sash that holds the 36 merit badges he earned in his seven years as a Boy Scout.

Koning earns Eagle Scout rank with camp project

Paul Koning, recent graduate and valedictorian of Clarenceville High School, received the rank of Eagle, Scouting's highest award, at a special Eagle Court of Honor June 3.

To attain this rank, a scout must have earned at least 21 merit badges, 12 of them required. Paul earned 38 in his seven years as a member of Boy Scout Troop 45 of Farmington.

He also must have shown leadership in a major community service project undertaken. His Eagle project consisted of rebuilding a firebowl and building benches around the firebowl for a church camp near Howell.

The scouts also did general cleanup of the firebowl area and woodpile. The project area is used for campfires and nature talks.

Paul has been called "the model Eagle Scout" by some for his dedication, leadership, Scout spirit, willingness to help his fellow scouts and community, and generally living by the Scout

oath and law.

This fall, he will attend Michigan Technological University in Houghton to study civil engineering.

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