

By Henry Bury

THE INTELLIGENCER

Downtown Belleville has its first optician in several years.

He is Allen Kechichian, who has opened Essenzia Eyewear at 224 Front St. that formerly housed the Royal Trust on the main floor and Lulu's/Dagwood's on the top floor.

Kechichian, a licensed optician, and his wife, Stacey, are leasing 3,500 square feet of space on the main floor to operate their optical store.

"We want to create a boutique ambiance and bring to Belleville some unique products and we chose downtown because we want to contribute to the revitalization of this area and promote 'The Village' and keep the spirit going," he said.

The couple couldn't be happier with their premises now that they have completed all the necessary renovations to the ground floor of the building that has sat vacant for several years.

"The building is filled with windows and this brings in a lot of sunlight which is a great advantage to show the different lenses and colours in a natural light. You get what you see because of the natural light," he said.

The 32-year-old Kechichian said he's pleased to be the only optician downtown "and we look forward to providing this much-needed service."

Their operation provides one-hour service on site for most prescriptions for regular lenses and contact lenses, including tint and ultra-violet protection and carries some unique brand names in frames and lenses.

"We have approximately 1,500 different styles of designer frames, including such new lines as Mexx, Vanni, Dolce Gabbana and Modo and lenses such as Nikon and Essilor," he said. "We believe in quality and we will only carry current models."

Kechichian has 14 years experience in the eyewear industry. He started as a lab technician and then optician and has also opened and operated multiple chain stores and served as district manager.

He came to Belleville in 1999 to open and manage the Laurier Optical chain store at the Quinte Mall.

"My wife and I, who also worked at the store, have served thousands of clients over those years and we have now decided to open our independent operation so that we can continue to offer quality service that people have come to expect," he said.

The couple has two children and they plan to be downtown for many years.

"Hopefully, the seed we plant today, we will harvest for many years to come and we hope to pass on the business tradition to our two children," said Kechichian.