

MacMaster Motors under new ownership

By Barb McKay

After nearly 35 years in business, Dianne MacMasters is closing the book on a memorable chapter in her life by saying goodbye to MacMaster Motors.

The business will not be closing, instead it will continue on under new ownership. Rowe Motors has purchased the business and will take over as of Sept. 30, moving towing, sales and mechanical services over to the location on Broadway Street. MacMaster's rental service will continue as it is and long-time employee Jim LeFleure will stay on.

"Jim will not be leaving the building," MacMasters said.

The decision to sell the business was an emotional one, but one MacMasters said her late husband Pat had planned to do as the couple prepared for retirement. The business was never listed. MacMasters said the family wanted the sale to go as smoothly as possible and have full control over who would take over. Scott Rowe of Rowe Motors contacted her son, Jesse, about the business and the company seemed like the perfect fit.

"I am so excited about Scott, Kim and Jamie Rowe of Rowe Motors taking over," MacMasters said, adding that her husband would have been very happy with the decision.

The company had humble beginnings. Prior to starting the business Pat and Dianne MacMasters both worked at Douglas Point, but Pat was unhappy in his job. In 1981, the couple opened P & D Auto on a property in the south end of Kincardine owned by Dave and Janice Small. The business started small and Pat always kept his eyes open for a commercial property that would allow the business to expand.

In 1983, they purchased the property on Broadway Street and set up operations out of a small white trailer. The shop was built a couple of years later, after the couple's eldest son Ryan was born and the business was renamed MacMaster Motors. Over the years, MacMasters said the business employed good people, including Joe and Mary Helen Moore. Several family members, including Pat's mom and dad and the couple's sons worked there at some point in time.

"We always wanted our business to have a

good reputation," she said. "It is about self-respect, humility and integrity. Customer satisfaction meant everything and honesty was huge. We went ahead with that and our business grew."

The MacMasters enjoyed three decades of successful business until Pat's sudden death on Jan. 4, 2012. Following Pat's passing, MacMasters said the outpouring from the community was incredible. She received offers of help from other automotive businesses in Kincardine, including Montgomery Ford and Lakeside Chevrolet. There were phone calls and cards from customers. It has made the decision to say goodbye to MacMaster Motors a bittersweet one.

"I am so humbled and grateful to all of our customers here, in the surrounding communities and around the world not only for their business but for the outpouring of love after Pat died," she said. "Please continue on with Rowe Motors. They come from humble beginnings just like we did."

MacMasters said she is also grateful for the friendship and support of Dan and Elaine Chau of the Knotty Pine, located across the street from MacMaster Motors. She said she will miss the fun times the couples shared, particularly impromptu karaoke sessions. Dan and Pat, along with Stan Johns, Jim McArthur, Tony Carrivagio and the

late Ron Stanley used to get together on Thursday nights for weekly 'guys nights'. MacMasters said she misses hearing the stories of those gatherings and is grateful to the men for providing such great friendship.

Most of all, she said, she is grateful to her children, Jesse and his wife Denise, Ryan and his partner Brooke Kempton and Chrissy and her husband Brock Lowry.

"There are no words to measure the depth of gratitude I have for everything they have done since their father passed. Their father would be so proud. His legend lives on in them and his three grandsons."

MacMasters said her focus now is on educating people on the signs of heart failure; encouraging the Heart and Stroke Foundation to focus on education and have cholesterol checks included in routine blood work. She has learned that knowledge can save lives. A chance conversation on the boardwalk with a man following Pat's death, explaining how heart attack symptoms were initially mistaken for indigestion, did save a life.

"I was so lifted to know that another family did not have to go through what we went through," she said.

MacMasters plans to hold a fundraiser next year in memory of Pat with proceeds going to the Kincardine food bank, a cause the family supports.

Aztec building to be converted into retail, office space

Developer aims to restore exterior to former glory

By Barb McKay

Rodger Crane has a soft spot for dilapidated historical buildings.

So, when the Aztec Theatre came up for sale he decided to purchase it. Crane took possession of the building at the corner of Queen and Durham streets on Wednesday and had crews in immediately to begin demolishing the interior. Once completed, the building will feature seven units, each approximately 1,000 square feet in size with mezzanines. The units will front onto Durham Street.

Crane brings plenty of experience to this ambitious project. He has spent close to a decade transforming old buildings in Port Elgin into functional retail and residential spaces.

"We take a building every couple of years that is kind of run down and repurpose it," he said.

Past projects have included the former Jangles Pub and Eatery building at Goderich and Gustavus streets and the old JK Hotel, which was converted into 11 rental condominiums. He is also involved with the Wismer House. This will be his first

development project in Kincardine. Working with him is Tara-based architect David Debell.

"It is a shame that it is a beautiful old building that has been allowed to get rundown," Crane said. "It has so much potential."

Crane hopes to complete work on the exterior of the building before winter and would like to have the units ready by spring.

"We would like to restore the front of the building to what it looked like originally in 1929," he said. "I'm really excited about how this is going to look. It is fun doing this sort of thing."



An artist's concept of how the front of the Aztec might look after the renovations. (courtesy of David Debell)

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