



November 20, 2009

## Portland bookstore has new owners

PORTLAND - Rush and Julie Clement, owners of Raffaeles' Marketplace in downtown Portland, are pleased to announce that they have purchased Rivertown Bookstore.

The Clements learned early this fall that former owners Dave and Jeannine Brown had decided to close the store.

"As owners of Rivertown Bookstore, we were finding that our attention to the business was being diverted by other ventures," said David Brown.

"Rather than see the store fade away, we were pleased to transfer it to the capable and creative hands of Rush and Julie Clement. We know that local readers will be well served for years to come."

## Retirement

Rivertown Bookstore operated on Bridge Street for several years, but the combination of Michigan's economic downturn and Merikay Cochran's pending retirement led to a decision to close early this year.

But after hearing from many disappointed customers and then talking with Rush Clement, the Browns decided to downsize and move the store into Raffaeles' Marketplace in early 2009.

"The retail sector is constantly changing," said Rush Clement.

"It's increasingly difficult to operate an independent retail store in a small town, and Rivertown Bookstore has been seeing far more traffic online than in the store. As a result, it's more and more difficult to justify the expenses of operating a bricks-and-mortar location."

After talking with the Browns and with a variety of customers, Rush and Julie decided that the bookstore is-and should remain-an important part of downtown Portland.

## Deal made

The Browns agreed. "We're pleased to see Rivertown Bookstore carry on here in Portland, so that local readers can continue to find good books and treasures here in our own downtown, with service that you simply cannot get from the Internet or the big box retailers."

Portland Main Street Manager and DDA Director Patrick Reagan noted, "It is great to see entrepreneurs continue to make investments in downtown Portland. I believe that this is due to the many hours of hard work that business owners and concerned citizens put in each year to make downtown Portland one of the best in Michigan."

Rush Clement said that he and Julie are excited about moving forward with the bookstore.

"The Browns and Merikay are tough acts to follow, but they've offered their continued guidance. Over the coming months, we intend to schedule a lot of activities in Raffaeles' Marketplace, including more book clubs, children's activities, and hands-on events."

# Incubation

The Clements are also working with the Small Business and Technology Development Corporation to fine-tune their retail incubator approach.

"Retail incubators are popping up all over the country...actually, all over the world," said Julie Clement.

"We were fortunate to start this during a growth period, but the current economy poses unique challenges. We're working with the SBTDC to explore innovative ways to overcome some of those challenges and offer more options for entrepreneurs."

The Clements hope to build an incubator model that will eventually be used in other small towns throughout Michigan.

"We believe that small communities are this country's most important assets," said the Clements.

"Our research is focused on finding more tools for rural entrepreneurs to use as they face increasing competition from big box stores, the Internet, and other competitors.

Local downtowns are more than a collection of businesses -- they are the heart of a community."

For more information about Rivertown Bookstore or Raffaeles' Marketplace, contact Rush Clement at (517) 647-6710 or [rushclement@gmail.com](mailto:rushclement@gmail.com).

- From Rivertown Bookstore

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