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Drugstore and More: Pharmacy Offers Special Service

LENOX, MA: A former president of Friendly's International is having fun these days running a friendly village pharmacy. When Larry Browne, an energetic, talkative and jovial man who would seem to fit easily into the world of ice cream sales, bought the Lenox Village Pharmacy from previous owner Dan Walczyk in July 2004, he knew he wanted to make some changes. But he took the time to get to know the store, its customers and the community. Then, about a year later, he got started.

One of his goals was to begin a new kind of prescription service.

He leased an additional 1,200 square feet of adjacent space in the Curtis building on Walker Street and moved the prescription assembly and medicine compounding operation in. Compounding is the manufacture of unique dosages and medicines that pharmaceutical firms do not produce because the market isn't big enough to make it profitable.

Then Browne expanded the retail space, renovated and repainted the interior, added a new customer service area, new shelving and some new, unique products.

Today, with the project essentially completed in June, the store seems more open, brighter, and a fit with the atmosphere of Lenox. Its new name is Lenox Village Integrative Pharmacy.

"I had this dream, this picture in my head," Browne said. "To see it happen is really a lot of fun, and to see people smile is really a part of what motivates me."

But smiling customers in the retail store are just part of Browne's objective. His business plan is to create a "healthy living center" and a big part of that is the prescription assembly and medicine compounding operation.

When he bought the store from Walczyk, he also hired him to manage the prescription

operation. Not only do they fill prescriptions, but they also manufacture the unique dosages and medicines that pharmaceutical firms do not.

These individualized medicines manufactured at the Lenox pharmacy go to individuals, hospice care facilities, physician centers, nursing homes and even veterinarians.

The operation also packages medicines and nutritional supplements in daily dosage packages for individuals and institutions like nursing homes and schools for special needs children.

Store personnel also deliver locally, package it for pick up, or ship it to customers in outlying or out-of-town locales.

"I think we're building a new business model," said Browne. "But it's because the whole system is beginning to change. It's starting to say, 'What's good for the individual?' So we're building a business that covers the whole spectrum."

Compounding medicines is not nearly as prevalent as it once was, not since chain drug stores started buying out and closing the independents, Browne noted. As a result, compounding has become a rarity.

"So Dan (Walczyk) is one of only a handful of professional compounders in the state," he said.

Walczyk and his wife bought the store in 1996, about a year after it was established. "Our vision was to make it different from the chain drug stores," Walczyk said.

And while he did the compounding back then, he said he wanted to do more of it. Now, with the additional space and his ability to focus on the compounding and prescription operation, he has already more than doubled his business in that area, and the growth curve is continuing.

"When (Browne) renovated the store, it made a big difference," Walczyk said. "It gave us a lot more elbow room in the prescription department, and it's more efficient."

Bill Wagoner, president of Chicopee Savings Bank, is a business associate and friend of Browne's. He said that before Browne bought the business, he had been familiar with it because he and his wife visit Lenox occasionally.

"One night he mentioned that he was thinking of buying the business, and I was intrigued," Wagoner said. "Today, I think his approach to that business is innovative and



he's proven that it can work."

He said that for an independent pharmacy to succeed, it has to set itself apart from the big chains.

"He really has a cutting-edge view of how he wants to do that," Wagoner said. "And he's carving a real niche for himself."

"I can do things that Walgreen's and CVS can't," said Browne, "like stocking fun unique items — good quality stuff that people won't find in other shops. And I integrated all the ingredients of health into this one little pharmacy." ■