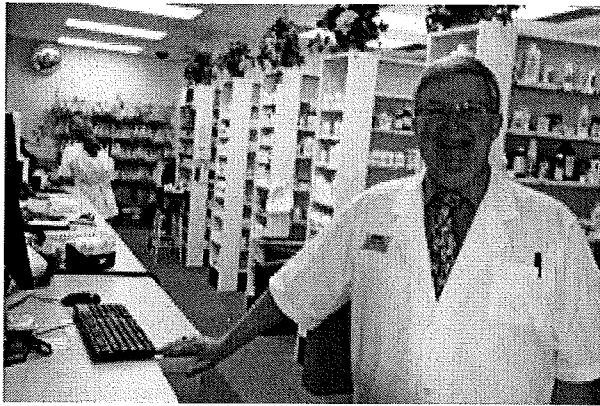


Longtime Ramsey pharmacist Wayne Jeffrey retires

By Sue Austreng

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When he started as pharmacist at Ramsey Drug Store 35 years ago, Wayne Jeffrey was 29 years old and Ramsey was “out in the country,” he said.



Pharmacist Wayne Jeffrey retires June 16 after nearly 40 years serving customers in Ramsey. Here he is pictured at the pharmacy located inside Coborn’s grocery store. Photo by Sue Austreng

“Across the street was a horse pasture, kitty-corner to us was a hay field. We were in the sticks, that’s for sure,” he said.

“Ramsey Drug was a full-blown, small-town drug store. We had cards and candy, cosmetics, toys, magazines – we weren’t just drugs – we were everything else, too,” the pharmacist said.

Times have changed over the years, and next week Jeffrey’s daily life will change, too. June 16 marks his retirement after nearly 40 years working as pharmacist. Most of those years were spent serving customers in Ramsey where he came after starting his career in Virginia, Minnesota.

With compassion in his heart and a smile on his face, Jeffrey served customers as though they were family, always happy to explain medications and side effects, answer questions and even deliver prescriptions to their homes, if necessary.

“He is always so warm and friendly, knows everyone’s name and made everyone feel like they were his best friend,” said customer Kathy Oppel-Overtoom who with her husband, Jim, has known Jeffrey since they started coming to Ramsey Drug in the mid-1980s.

“One time I forgot to refill my prescription and it was one I couldn’t do without. It was about 4 o’clock and I knew he closed at 5, but I called Wayne and he said, ‘Don’t worry. I can fill it for you,’” she said. “And then he told me I didn’t have to go out. ‘I’ll drop it off at your house on my way home,’ he said. And that’s what he did – just like one of those old-fashioned doctors doing house calls. He just made everybody feel so good.”

Customers and fellow pharmacists alike call Jeffrey compassionate, trusted, professional and caring.

“He’s a man with compassion for patients and co-workers. He’s a trusted professional,” said pharmacist Lynn Young, who works with him at the pharmacy inside Coborn’s grocery store in Ramsey.

Pharmacy technician Ashley Mohrman also spoke highly of Jeffrey’s work.

“He’s one of the most bubbly, outgoing, friendly people I know,” she said. “He’s like family to his patients. People come to this pharmacy because of him.”

When Jeffrey first came to Ramsey and worked at Ramsey Drug Store, it was located inside the Ramsey Medical Clinic on Highway 47 (the current Allina Health Ramsey Clinic).

Just four years into his time at Ramsey Drug, the owners sold the drug store to Jeffrey and his wife, Vivian.

“I was terrified. I had to learn to run a business and I was young, but Viv and I, we made a go at it,” Jeffrey said.

The young couple’s “go at it” was successful, as evidenced by a patient base of 25,000 and the two pharmacy technicians who worked with him for 25 and 30 years before their own retirements a few years ago.

“That really tells you how he cares for people and how he makes work fun, too. He creates a nice, relaxed atmosphere and that makes it nice for us and for customers,” said pharmacy technician Darla Larson, who works with Jeffrey at Coborn’s Pharmacy.

Change continued during Jeffrey’s pharmaceutical service in Ramsey.

In 1998, Jeffrey said Ramsey Medical Clinic grew and needed more space, “so our space physically shrunk but our focus on pharmacy grew,” he said, describing the name change from Ramsey Drug to Ramsey Pharmacy and the finish of his time selling all the other items in the store.

In 2011, after Coborn’s Inc. acquired Ramsey Pharmacy, Jeffrey and his crew moved from the medical center into Coborn’s grocery store in Ramsey and became Coborn’s Pharmacy.

“Moving into Coborn’s was a big transition, but our customers followed us. They’re like family,” Jeffrey said.

Jeffrey, who earned his Bachelor of Science degree in pharmacy from the University of Minnesota, said he decided to become a pharmacist when “the neighbor lady told my mom ‘I think he’d make a good pharmacist.’”

“I don’t know what she saw in me that made her say that, but I liked math and science, I love taking care of people and didn’t know what else I was going to do, so I thought I’d be a pharmacist,” Jeffrey said.

And now, as he anticipates the months and years following retirement, Jeffrey will continue to take care of people. He plans to continue making medical mission trips to Guatemala, already having completed three such trips with a mission group called Helps.

He’d also like to return to the Red Lake Indian Reservation on humanitarian missions with members of his church, the Catholic Church of St. Katharine Drexel in Ramsey.

And of course, his desire to serve people as pharmacist will continue when he fills in for vacationing pharmacists and technicians at Coborn’s Pharmacy.

“We won’t let him get away that easy. Our customers won’t let us,” said Mohrman, smiling.

A celebration for Jeffrey is planned for June 16 at Coborn’s Pharmacy, 7900 Sunwood Drive NW, Ramsey. The public is welcome to stop by for coffee and cookies and to wish Jeffrey well.

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