Pharmacy man has a plan in Mt. Pleasant.

When Ed Christofano heard the news about Diamond Pharmacy in Mt. Pleasant selling its retail operation to CVS Pharmacy in late 2013, he said he was saddened for the people of the borough who were longtime customers there.

“Mt. Pleasant has always had a pharmacy in town, and then all of a sudden, it didn't,” said Christofano, a borough resident and a pharmacist who, in 2007, assumed ownership of Hayden's Pharmacy based in Youngwood.

The news recently led Christofano, president and chief executive officer of Christofano Associates LLC, to purchase the building housing the In Town Shops in Mt. Pleasant from the Mt. Pleasant Business Authority. The parent company of Hayden's Pharmacy of Youngwood, Christofano Associates LLC opened a second pharmacy in 2010 Greensburg Area.

Christofano now plans to establish a third operation under the Hayden's Pharmacy name in a 1,700-square-foot space at the In Town Shops building located at 535 W. Main St., he said.

“Our company purchased the entire building from the borough in hopes to renovate and bring a state of the art pharmaceutical facility that still has the old, 'corner drug store' feel to it,” Christofano said.

Christofano's plan to open a pharmacy at the site is pending approval of an application he submitted to the state Board of Pharmacy for a license to practice there, he said.

PENDING PRACTICE TO STRESS HOMETOWN SERVICE

In keeping with the terms of the sale of Diamond Pharmacy's retail operation to CVS Pharmacy, the prescriptions of Diamond's clientele were turned over to the major chain retailer.

For decades, Diamond Pharmacy was a staple in Mt. Pleasant's Main Street, along with Gunsallus & Armor Pharmacy, Burns Drug and the Medicine Shoppe.

One by one, they all closed in the face of a changing economy in a corporate climate, Christofano said.

“The industry has definitely changed over time,” said Christofano, a graduate of Ohio State University's College of Pharmacy in Columbus. And he would know, as Christofano started his career as a pharmacy manager who quickly grew into other management roles with corporate pharmacies, he said.

But, over time, Christofano said he was drawn to the idea of operating an independent, local store that would allow him and his staff to more personally and effectively cater to the customers.

“We, as a company, pride ourselves on customer service, convenience and dedication to the communities we serve,” he said. “Our customers at Hayden's Pharmacy can be assured that the quality and tradition of personalized pharmacy services is the foundation of our business.”
DEAL GETS DONE WITH AID FROM LOCAL LEADERS

After news regarding Diamond Pharmacy broke, Christofano said he almost immediately began looking for a location to expand his practice in the borough.

First, he said, he consulted borough Manager Jeff Landy.

“When I first had the chance to talk to Ed, I realized he would be a welcome addition to the business district,” Landy said. “He's a small town guy with big ideas. He has stressed customer service, along with being a partner and neighbor in community, so we welcome him, and people like him.”

By February, Christofano had struck a deal the authority's executive director, to buy the building which is located on Main Street.

Along with Barsotti and Landy, borough Mayor Jerry Lucia and council President Joe Bauer helped seal the pact, Christofano said.

He lauded them for doing their part to make the deal happen.

A WIN FOR THE BOROUGH, LEADERS SAY

Barsotti confirmed that the authority has been trying to sell the building housing In Town Shops for “several years.”

The fact that the buyer is someone of Christofano's ilk makes this outcome all the better, he said.

“We're really happy Ed is in town, and we think it's a great thing for Mt. Pleasant's businesses to bring back a pharmacy,” said Barsotti, who added that borough council proved instrumental in responding to Christofano's inquiries and assessing his options.

Bauer said he was impressed by Christofano's professional and personal demeanor from the outset.

“I think he's a very upstanding businessman, and I think that, with his personality, that business is going to be a success,” Bauer said.

Bauer added that he had faced questions from residents who didn't want to travel out of town for their prescriptions.

“Now they won't have to. To have a pharmacy back in town, that just proves the efforts of our leadership to try to keep downtown vibrant,” he said.

BUSINESS'S INNER WORKINGS TAKE SHAPE

Pending licensure, the local establishment will be called Hayden's Pharmacy, and it will officially be located just inside the main entrance of the building.

Renovation work has already begun at the hands of local contractor Joe Siska, or “Handyman Joe,” and his crew, who are re-facing the available space to enable an apothecary-style pharmacy, Christofano said.

In addition to prescriptions, the operation will sell nutritional items, vitamins, over-the-counter medications and select foods and drinks, Christofano said.

“Our format is more aligned with healthcare and patient wellness,” he said.

SYNERGY WITH OTHER TENANTS IS DESIRED

The existing, renting tenants of the In Town Shops, including Angie's Cafe, the Mt. Pleasant Area Historical Society, the Mt. Pleasant Business District Authority and Hometown Family Counseling Services, will all remain operating in their respective spaces, Christofano said.

“It is my goal to help them grow their businesses, as well,” he said.

Christofano also plans to grow relationships with the local clientele he attracts pending the facility's opening.
“I believe the pharmacist is an old-fashioned staple in the community who can offer help to those who need it,” he said. “We are going to get to know our patients in Mt. Pleasant, and provide them the service they deserve.”

In addition, Christofano said, the pharmacy he plans for the borough will also include an immunization clinic to offer patients a convenient place to have their blood pressure and glucose levels checked and to receive immunizations, such as flu shots and other vaccines.

“It’s today's form of modern personalized pharmacy service; because we’re now allowed to offer such a clinic as health care providers,” Christofano said.

For patients interested in having their prescriptions and/or medications transferred to Christofano’s local practice, pending its opening, there will be step-by-step process in place to do so seamlessly, he said.

“We accept all major insurances, we offer $4 generic program, and all with less than 10 minute wait times,” he said. “When patients are sick, the last place they want to be waiting endlessly is the pharmacy for their prescriptions. Our goal as a company is to keep you healthy and moving.”

ENTREPRENEUR IS EXCITED TO START

Christofano said he is excited at the prospect of doing business in the town where he lives.

“That’s what we’re all about, taking care of residents in this community,” Christofano said.

Mayor Lucia said that is the best news the borough has gotten in a long time.”We’re joyous over it, it's going to be a big addition for people here in town,” Lucia said. “And this is going to benefit the BDA, because with the overhead of the building no longer being their responsibility, they’re going to be able to put more effort into Main Street as a whole.”

And the promise to return a hometown pharmacy to borough residents has been fulfilled.

“We needed a pharmacy, and we pride ourselves in Mt. Pleasant on offering all that's needed; that's what we try to do as a borough,” Landy said Borough Manager.

Those with any questions should visit haydenspharmacy.com.