

Owners of Historic Oregon Business Closing Doors for Good

Greenbaum's Quilted Forest in Salem has been a family store for more than a century

The owners of Greenbaum's Quilted Forest are planning to shut the historic business in downtown Salem after trying to seek an appropriate buyer to carry on their tradition.

Sylvia and Bill Dorney have both been involved in the downtown business and community activities for years, and they are ready to retire. They will start the business closeout June 24 with ten days of Preview Night fun, featuring demonstrations of favorite products, game prizes, and 15 percent off all purchases.

At ages 67 (Sylvia) and 72 (Bill), "We're done," Sylvia said. They want to spend more time with their daughter and son-in-law, Megan and Mason Caldwell, and two young grandsons in Portland.

The couple had hoped to find someone with both the energetic ability and the financial resources to take over the quilt shop, which has a staff of 16 part-time clerks and teachers. The Dorneys were willing to serve as advisers during the transition.

Without the entry of an appropriate buyer, they decided to make a celebration of their exit, with quilt-related prizes and daily specials in addition to closeout discounts.

"Gift cards and full shopping punch cards will be honored as long as we are open," Sylvia said. "Come in soon for the best selection of our fun fabric and useful quilting notions."

Also, ongoing classes, including the yearlong Block of the Month club and the summer youth quilt camps, will run to completion. The Quiltopia fall festival at the Willamette Heritage Center will continue. So will the Oregon Garden Quilt Challenge, but the winner will receive a cash award instead of a shop gift certificate.

Greenbaum's Quilted Forest is Salem's oldest family retail business at the same location. It is housed in the 1889 Boothby/Greenbaum Building, which has extensive display space as well as class areas and customer access at both front and back. Both the building and the antique fixtures will be sold.

The business began in 1900 as a department store under Sylvia's grandfather, Isadore Greenbaum. It passed to her uncle, Adolph Greenbaum, who converted it to a fabric shop in the mid-1940s; then to her mother, Irene Depenbrock; and finally to Sylvia, who started specializing in quilts in 1988.

For nearly four decades, the Dorneys have watched the transformation of downtown Salem, including such additions as the Salem Center retail blocks and the Marion County/Cherriots office and bus complex. "We're lucky to be a part of that," said Bill, formerly the executive director of the Salem Downtown Association and the Salem Convention and Visitors Association.

The Dorneys were instrumental in the formation of the Downtown Creative District in Salem, in which six neighboring businesses promote events and share customers for the benefit of all, Sylvia said. Each August, the shops and Greenbaum's Facebook page feature a quilt auction for a canine charity, Fences for Fido. The shop also was the leading sponsor of Quiltopia, an autumn weekend of quilt displays, classes, home tours, and more.

Greenbaum's has been honored by Better Homes and Gardens magazine as one of the top 20 quilt shops in the United States and Canada, and by the Willamette Heritage Center as a heritage enterprise in Salem.

Sylvia said she was 8 years old when her mother taught her to sew. She grew up working in the family store and stitching model items for display. She and Bill brought up their daughter, Megan, the same way.

The Dorneys said they discussed having Megan become the family's fourth generation to run the shop, but she declined. Megan has built her own career and family life in Portland.

According to the Family Business Institute, based in Raleigh, N.C., about 30 percent of family businesses survive to a second generation, 12 percent to a third, and only 3 percent to a fourth or beyond.

Greenbaum's Quilted Forest features colorful modern materials and stitchery, many created in the Northwest, as well as traditional fabrics and varied handicrafts, including rug hooking and embroidery.

Sylvia has enjoyed keeping a modern up-to-the-minute selection in the store. The Dorneys say they are very sad to see this chapter of their lives ending, but they look forward to a fun-filled retirement. For more information on the closeout sale, check the shop's website, www.quiltedforest.com (The website's free pattern downloads will be available until the end.)

Greenbaum's Quilted Forest

Location: 240 Commercial St. NE, Salem, OR 97301.

Hours: Beginning June 24: 10am-6pm 7 days

Contact: phone 503-363-7973; website www.quiltedforest.com.

For more information, contact Sylvia Dorney at 503-871-1803 (cell) or sylvia@quiltedforest.com.