

Downtown businesses add Uptown to their mix

Locally owned clothing store and bakery set up shop

ANDREW A. DUFFY
Times Colonist

Dale Olsen has been in the clothing business for more than 30 years and in that time has learned a thing or two about being either ahead of, or at least "on trend," which may explain why his new store, the third Outlooks for Men on the Island, has opened at Uptown.

The new store opened on Good Friday at the Saanich outdoor shopping centre, and is the latest in a series of local retailers and service providers who have decided to make the move or expand to the centre. "I just came to terms with the fact that Victoria is a bigger town now and is growing constantly," said Olsen from his new 4,000 square foot space. "There are people, who for whatever reason, don't get downtown; this was an opportunity to put what I do in front of a different set of eyes."

Uptown now has 32 local businesses amid its town-centre-styled outdoor mall, which features major anchor tenants, Walmart, Whole Foods and Best Buy.

Olsen's move is the most recent addition, and it is testament to his fairly optimistic outlook that he would open and procure inventory for a new store in the midst of a pandemic. "I'm convinced we will eventually get out of this," he said, of



Dale Olsen at his new Outlooks for Men store at Uptown: "This was an opportunity to put what I do in front of a different set of eyes."

ADRIAN LAM, TIMES COLONIST

a pandemic that has had a severe impact on retail operations and supply chains worldwide and limited the number of customers in the new store to 10 at any time.

For Olsen, the new store — his first location remains open at 534 Yates St. downtown and there is a second in Duncan — is a chance to take on the challenging times and create new customers.

"This is about recouping lost dollars," he said, noting they will carry the same lines and offer the same high-end service

and in-house tailoring they do at their other locations.

What it's not about is indicting downtown, which has been hit hard during the pandemic.

Olsen said he still loves downtown and points out the area was thriving just before the pandemic hit last year. "It was really hitting its stride a year and a half ago," he said. "For everybody who thinks downtown is in trouble, there's another person moving into a condo. Eventually, downtown will be great again. Until we get people back in

their offices I expect downtown will be tough for a little while."

Tom Moore agrees.

The co-owner and chef of Crust Bakery also said he still loves downtown — Crust's first location opened in 2013 at 730 Fort St. and remains a popular destination — but when the pandemic hit and they saw numbers dwindle they felt a need to take their food to another location and Uptown was definitely the "up and coming spot."

Crust built a kiosk at Uptown last fall. "However, it doesn't mean we have abandoned downtown by any means," he said.

Moore said the sheer number of people living downtown in new condos has helped make up for the significant reduction in the number of people working in the core. "It's still busy. There may be fewer cars and less people going into town but it's not really affecting things."

The attraction for Crust to Uptown was the volume of people, ease of parking, access and the way the centre does business. "They have been great, made it very much worth my while and have been nothing but fantastic," Moore said. "We love it there, we absolutely love it."

Moore said his business prides itself on doing things a certain way, striving for excellence their customers can count on and he found kindred spirits at Uptown. "They fit our business model, we like to do things properly, we don't cut

corners, and that was reflected at Uptown," he said, adding it was obvious from the manicured gardens to their social media presence. "There's a really good feel there and it fits our style beautifully."

Ensuring a strong local presence at the centre has been a guiding principle of Uptown since it started, said Kristy Lowes, who has been with the centre since before it opened for business 10 years ago. "We always wanted to have a combination of national retailers, the premier big-box stores and then the independent and specifically local to Victoria retailers," she said. "It provides an additional option when customers decide to shop Uptown — they are often surprised when they come that they can find a lot of their local independents when they come for groceries or other things."

That local component will be an important part of the mix as Uptown adds a residential component in the next few years.

Moore said the pandemic, which forced Crust to shut down on Fort Street for a month last year, was a bit of a blessing in disguise as it allowed him and partner Crystal Moore to rejig the business plan and consider expansion to Uptown. "Businesses are really suffering locally and we are lucky to have an opportunity to get our product out there and get a bit more exposure," he said. "A little hard work has paid off."



McLanahan - 55th
John & Claudette

55 years ago April 11th, a team for the ages was created when John and Claudette said their "I Do's" at Sacred Heart Catholic Church in Calgary. These two career educators met while teaching at Saint Francis High School; Claudette, a piano playing, guitar strumming native of the City of Roses headed West for a new adventure where she met John, mountain born and raised with football fever and a love of the outdoors.

Having spent almost half their marriage on Vancouver Island, many have been blessed with Claudette's quilting prowess and musical talents, as well as John's award winning volunteerism, assisting those in need of food, hospice services and transportation. Their involvement in "Island Life" speaks volumes for this pair of Albertans abroad. Proud and appreciative kids: Tim (RoAnna), Mark (Astrid) and Lisa (Steve). A more boastful set of grandparents for Marci, Max, Noah, Carter, Fiona and Jackson would be hard to find.

Thank you Mom & Dad for demonstrating love, strength, laughter and kindness.
Happy Anniversary!



May - 30th

Robin & Sylvia married April 15, 1991 in Hawaii, 30 years ago. Many wonderful memories to cherish over the years and our adventure continues on!



Olive Bailey turned 100
on April 10th!

Congratulations to our Mom, Grandma, and Great-Grandmother!

From surviving the Blitz in London to cold winters in Moose Jaw, Sask, Olive Bailey turned 100 years old on April 10th, 2021. Love and Best Wishes from: Nephew and Family, Grandkids: Sarah and Andrew, and Great-Grandchildren: Annabelle and Elise, Andrew, Junior, Camille and Clever, Florence and our little Gino - who turned one last week - 99 years younger than his Great-Grandmother...

Province to improve cellular service from Sooke to Port Renfrew

DARRON KLOSTER
Times Colonist

A notorious cell phone dead zone between Sooke and Port Renfrew should be eliminated by fall.

The province said wireless infrastructure along a 70-kilometre stretch of Highway 14 will be in place by October, connecting more than 1,200 households as well as emergency responders and the thousands of travellers who frequent the beaches and trails along the route.

The project will also bring cellular service to Port Renfrew, Shirley, Otter Point and Jordan River, as well as the Pacheedaht First Nation communities of Gordon River 2 and Pacheena 1.

A highway rest area near the entrance to Sombrero Beach, a popular surfing hotspot, will be upgraded to provide a Wi-Fi connection, improving safety and convenience for people passing through or coming to enjoy a view of the ocean or a hike down the trails, the province said.

The announcement is being welcomed by first responders. "Like so many emergency responders, [we] have come to rely upon cellular service for voice and data communications," said Vickie Weber, senior man-

ager of Juan de Fuca Search and Rescue.

"Many online resources enhance our capability and response to people who may be having a life-threatening emergency."

"We know it will have a significant impact on any [search-and-rescue] emergency along this route," she said.

Funding for the project is from the province's Stronger B.C. Economic Recovery Plan, which included a one-time \$90-million grant to the Connecting British Columbia program to expand high-speed internet and cellular access in rural and Indigenous communities.

The Connecting British Columbia program provides grants that help service providers with the costs of building infrastructure. Rogers Communications has been selected to receive up to \$4.9 million to build the cell tower infrastructure.

In a statement, Premier John Horgan, whose riding includes the area, said a cellular signal provides "peace of mind knowing you can stay in touch ... and call for help if it's needed." This investment will make a real difference for people.

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