

A CHANGE IN HANDS

Owner of auto body shop to retire after 39 years

By Evan Myers | Daily Reporter
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GREENFIELD — After nearly four decades of auto body work in the city of Greenfield, local business owner Rusty Low is retiring.

Low recently sold his business, Rusty Low's Collision Center, to Riley and Sons Collision & Mechanical Specialists. Low has been doing body work in Greenfield for 39 years. He has grown close to his employees there, having worked with some of them for more than 25 years. Leaving is bittersweet, but Low feels confident the business will continue on in good hands.

Riley and Sons started out in Anderson in 1957, said co-owner Dave Driggers. The collision repair shop later expanded to new cities in central Indiana, with Greenfield their fifth location. It's a family-owned business, and its leadership plans to implement top-of-the-line collision repair equipment while preserving the same friendly-atmosphere familiar to Rusty Low's customer base, Driggers said.

Riley and Sons will be investing \$200,000 in new equipment right off the bat, Driggers

said. This will include an advanced laser measuring system and spot welding capabilities. The business has had an eye on Rusty Low's business for some time, Driggers said.

Riley and Sons began discussing buying Rusty Low's business back in 2007, he said. They were attracted to the shop's location and positive reputation with both their customer base and insurance companies.

Ten years later, Rusty Low finally conceded, and the two companies made plans for the change in management. It took Low some time to decide he was ready to retire, but he was not at all uncertain in who he wanted to take over his business.

"I never even marketed or talked to anybody else besides Dave Driggers and Tim Riley," Low said, referencing Driggers' co-owner. "I felt like they were going to come in, take care of my customers and my employees better than anyone else I knew, so I stuck with them."

While well-known in Madison County, they hope to be welcomed into Greenfield by maintaining Rusty Low's familiar family-focused atmosphere and attentive service, Driggers said.

They also will retain all the current employees of the business, he added.

"As a smaller business, one of the biggest assets whenever we go to buy a location is the local staff," Driggers said. "We can't do it without them."

Another important mission of Riley and Sons is connecting with customers on an individual level, added Brian Huffman, the new manager of Riley and Sons' Greenfield branch. They hope to provide people in need with the customer service they deserve.

Low is grateful to his loyal customer base over the years. He recalls providing service for three generations of some Greenfield families. Knowing that he's worked on the cars of a customer, his son and his grandson is a remarkable feeling, Low said.

It's enough to make him a little emotional, he said. "I went to the bank the other day, and the bank manager there just gave me a hug," Low chuckled. "He said, 'You fixed my car for twenty years!'"

But Low leaves the company in capable hands, he said.

"[Riley and Sons] won't disappoint the community," Low said. "It will be as good or better as what I did."



Submitted Photo
Rusty Low, owner of Rusty Low's Collision Center, recently sold the business to Riley and Sons Collision and Mechanical Specialists after nearly 40 years in operation.

Santa, come to Indiana; we've got goodies for you

Elvin Elfenhausen, one of Santa's long-term helpers, recently joined me for a cup of hot chocolate. "What brings you to Indiana?" I asked. "Normally we meet up at the North Pole."

"Yes," he agreed, "but the Big Guy wants me to check out locations in Indiana for our workshop."

"What? Santa leaving the North Pole?" I was astonished.

"Shhh! We don't want anyone to know, but the Big Guy is adjusting to the melting polar cap as well as the problems of finding flying reindeer. He's thinking of switching to FedEx, UPS and USPS. The sleigh is too small for the volume he has to handle and, frankly, he's tired of going down chimneys to find only milk and cookies."

"Incredible," I said. "Indiana does have a town in Spencer County already named for him. And I'm sure North Vernon, North Judson and even South Bend, East Chicago and West



MORTON MARCUS

Lafayette would happily change their names to be home to Santa."

"Sure," Elvin said. "We think this could be better for a community than landing Amazon's new headquarters. The tourist dollars alone would top Elvis' Graceland."

"Oh, Indiana would be a great place for Santa's Workshop," I said. "We're 45th in the nation in percent of people working at home. Only folks in Kentucky, Arkansas, Alabama, Louisiana and Mississippi are less likely to work at home."

"So what?" he asked. "They're our competition,"

I answered. "They're states that don't have workers with the skills or firms with the flexibility to have people working on their own recognition. And maybe they're just as unconnected from high speed internet as is Indiana."

"But are Hoosiers willing to travel to get to work?" he asked. "Aren't they mainly home-bodies?"

"Yes and no," I was emphatically ambiguous. "It is true that the average commute to work for Hoosiers (24 minutes) is below the national average (27 minutes), but plenty of our workers are well above or well below that figure."

In four of Indiana's 92 counties (Lake, Morgan, Hendricks and Porter) average commute times are greater than the national average. We also have seven counties with average commute times less than 20 minutes, including

Grant, Elkhart, Bartholomew and Howard counties."

"Then Hoosiers are willing to travel, but many don't have to," Elvin concluded.

"Exactly," I agreed. "It seems, then," he said, "Indiana could be a good site for Santa's Workshop."

"Precisely," I said. "We've got the transit facilities, old fashioned workers, our famous (notorious) low business taxes, as well as sensible (tax) environmental and workplace regulations. Plus, we'll pay through the nose to get Santa to relocate here."

"None of that will be necessary," Elvin said stiffly. "Santa gladly pays taxes, if asked. He has lots of benefits for his workers and doesn't take inducements (bribes). After all, he is a mythical employer."

Morton Marcus is an economist, formerly with the Indiana University Kelley School of Business. Send comments to dr-editorial@greenfieldreporter.com.

BUSINESS

BRIEFS

Opening available on McCordsville commission

MCCORDSVILLE — Are you interested in helping the town's economic development efforts? The McCordsville Redevelopment Commission has an opening for one member beginning in January. Currently, the RDC is working with a consultant to begin the visioning and stakeholder process for a Town Center. They recently completed an overhaul of the Economic Development Plan and rolled out a new "Next Stop McCordsville" website, which features business-related issues. The RDC looks for ways to provide economic development and redevelopment within the town. If interested, please fill out the Committee Volunteer application and return to Tonya Galbraith at tgalbraith@mccordsville.org.

Hospice serving county celebrates 15 years

CARMEI — Guardian Angel Hospice celebrates its 15th anniversary this month. The facility provides end-of-life care to 30 Indiana counties including Hancock County.

In 2001, a group of hospice professionals called themselves "The Founding Angels" came together to start a new organization based on the belief that they could provide higher quality hospice care than any other organization in central Indiana. The business, which has sites in Kokomo, Logansport, Lafayette and Carmel, guides its organization by the values of professionalism, teamwork, stewardship, integrity and service.

To learn more about Guardian Angel Hospice, visit guardianangelhospice.com or call 800-338-4043.

Indiana BMV announces holiday closure schedule

INDIANAPOLIS — All Indiana Bureau of Motor Vehicle branches will be closed Dec. 23 through Dec. 26 in observance of the Christmas holiday. Branches will resume regularly scheduled business hours Dec. 27.

In addition, branches will be closed Dec. 30 through Jan. 1 in observance of the New Year's holiday. All branches will resume regularly scheduled business hours beginning Jan. 2.

For a complete list of branch locations and hours, visit mybmvc.com.

State enrollment in health care rises by 19 percent

INDIANAPOLIS — More people have signed up for health coverage at HealthCare.gov this year than ever before — nearly 3.6 million nationally. What's more impressive is that in Indiana, 58,255 have signed up for coverage — a 19 percent increase from a similar point last year.

"Such a strong start to open enrollment shows just how much people want health insurance and that they're finding coverage they can afford when they visit HealthCare.gov," said Lori Lodes, co-founder of Get America Covered.

Facts about Open Enrollment in Indiana:

- Since Open Enrollment started Nov. 1, 58,255 Hoosiers have selected a plan through HealthCare.gov, with total sign-ups in Indiana up by 19 percent from last year.

- Because of financial help, plans for 2018 are more affordable than ever before. Four in 10 people in Indiana who enrolled can find plans for \$75 or less a month in premiums after tax credits.

- Free confidential enrollment help is available if people in Indiana have questions or want to talk through their options with a trained professional.

Visit LocalHelp@HealthCare.gov to find in-person help in your community.

Reach out 24 hours a day to the HealthCare.gov call center at 1-800-318-2596. Trained experts can answer your questions and help you enroll.