

Doors Close On Paprika Grille; Sale Is Pending on Restaurant

By KIM KINTER
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader and The Times

WESTFIELD - Ken Marcotte, who for the last 11 years has operated restaurants in downtown Westfield, has closed his latest endeavor, Paprika Grille.

The restaurant, located at 115 Elm Street, officially closed with little fanfare last Saturday evening. Restaurant staff told customers it was the last night the Paprika Grille would be open, but no signs announcing the closing were posted in or outside the restaurant.

Mr. Marcotte, who does not intend to open another restaurant in Westfield for now, is selling the restaurant and told *The Westfield Leader* and *The Times* that he has talked with several interested buyers. He added that he is close to concluding a sale and may have a signed contract by sometime next week.

It has been just one year since Mr. Marcotte and his wife and partner, Nancy Marcotte, opened the Paprika Grille. For 10 years previous to that, Mr. and Mrs. Marcotte operated Ken Marcotte International Delicacies — commonly known as Ken Marcotte — at the same location.

Ken Marcotte was a pricey, formal restaurant featuring contemporary American food. It received recognition in area publications and was featured in various Zagat Surveys of New Jersey restaurants, including the 1999 update. Zagat Surveys separately rate the distinct qualities of a restaurant measured by extensive questionnaires, short reviews and numerical ratings.

"We found that people dressed up all week to go to work and when they went out on weekends, they didn't want to dress up," Mr. Marcotte commented. "They were looking for something less formal."

So, Mr. and Mrs. Marcotte one year ago changed the restaurant's color schemes, furnishings and menu to reflect a more casual restaurant and reopened under the name Paprika Grille. The restaurant's cuisine was described by Mr. Marcotte as "American grill" that featured meats, fish and poultry grilled over a wood burning stove and a selection of various pasta.

Both of his restaurants also were known for Mr. Marcotte's homemade ice cream, the popularity of which prompted the couple to open an ice cream shop in downtown Cranford about a year and a half ago.

At the same time that the couple began operating the transformed Paprika Grille, Mrs. Marcotte juggled the management of the ice cream shop that offered 32 homemade flavors and various Italian ices.

"We have a young daughter and we finally asked ourselves why we were doing this," Mrs. Marcotte said of the ice cream store. The couple

decided not to renew the lease and closed the store.

Likewise, although Mr. Marcotte said that the restaurant had done well, he said that he and his wife were exhausted.

"Owning a restaurant is very difficult. There are long days and you work all the time. We're very tired," he said.

Mr. Marcotte conceded that he also has had to spend much time on local "governing regulatory" issues during his years in business in Westfield.

When he opened Paprika Grille, he said he unsuccessfully tried to convince the Westfield Town Council to ease restrictions on that Westfield's liquor ordinance so that

ing to restaurants about work as a chef.

He said that he has been talking to one restaurant at the New Jersey Shore about an executive chef position and is working with a search firm about other possibilities, including some that may move the Marcottes out of the state.

Still, giving up the restaurant will be an adjustment for Mr. Marcotte, 37. He first came to Westfield 13 years ago when he opened a take-out food and off-premise catering business at 235 North Avenue, now the site of Mojave Grille. He operated that business, along with his wife, for two years before opening up a restaurant there and moving to Elm Street.



William A. Burke for The Westfield Leader and The Times

DOORS CLOSED... Paprika Grille closed last Saturday almost one year after it opened. Owners Ken and Nancy Marcotte formerly operated the Ken Marcotte restaurant at the same location for 10 years before reopening the business as Paprika Grille.

those with a restricted liquor license, such as Mr. Marcotte, could offer bar service inside their establishments.

The restaurateur told council members at the time that he "wanted a bar to better serve his customers." He said that a full bar would increase business and "take my business in a slightly different direction." The ordinance, proposed in April, 1997, failed to pass.

And recently, he said he was told by the town to remove a restaurant sign from the side of his establishment or face a fine due to a zoning code violation.

"If I could take a month off with no phone calls, no problems, not have to come in one day, I might have considered staying," he added.

Instead the couple decided not to renew the restaurant's lease and will try to spend more time as a family. The couple, who live in Scotch Plains, have a 4 1/2-year-old daughter.

Mr. Marcotte, meanwhile, is talk-

ing to restaurants about work as a chef. He said that he has been talking to one restaurant at the New Jersey Shore about an executive chef position and is working with a search firm about other possibilities, including some that may move the Marcottes out of the state.

"I'm sorry to see him go," he said.

Mr. Marcotte, originally from Detroit, is a graduate of the Culinary Institute of America in Hyde Park, New York. He said he's loved the restaurant business since age 14, when he first started working in

Michigan.

After graduation from the Culinary Institute of America, Mr. Marcotte worked in New York City, helped open a restaurant in a new San Antonio hotel and taught at the French Culinary Institute in New York before coming to Westfield.

He said that since he came, the restaurant competition in Westfield has become increasingly keen.

"The piece of pie is getting smaller and smaller," he commented. "But the Westfield people have been great," he said. "We've been very happy being in Westfield. The residents were always supportive. We are going to miss a lot of them. We had a group of regulars, but we appealed to a lot of out-of-towners."

Westfield resident and former Councilman James Hely was one of those regulars. He said that the Marcottes themselves made the restaurant special.

"They gave people a lot of fun. They had a good run," he said.

Westfield Resident Volunteers To Teach Refugees at Fort Dix

By FRED ROSSI
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader and The Times

WESTFIELD — When refugees from the recently-concluded war in Kosovo began arriving at Fort Dix in New Jersey this spring, Lydia Kaplan recalled that her "first impulse was to volunteer in any capacity, because they're here in our home state, and I felt it was my obligation and pleasure to assist in any way I could."

Ms. Kaplan, a Westfield resident who has taught English as a Second Language at Kean University in Union for nearly six years, called Governor Christine Todd

Whitman's office in Trenton and was eventually put in touch with several volunteer agencies working with the Kosovars. In late April, she was asked to teach English to the growing refugee population at Fort Dix.

When she formally began volunteering at the base in mid-May, Ms. Kaplan chose to teach the children. "A few of them speak English because they studied it in school in their homeland," she told *The Westfield Leader* and *The Times*.

While they're "not fluent, some do have a basic background," she

revealed. Students range in age from 4 to 17. While the class size averages about 15 pupils, she said the younger children tend to wander in and out of what is strictly a voluntary class.

Ms. Kaplan spends every Saturday at Fort Dix teaching two, two-hour sessions.

"My objective is to prepare them for all the paperwork and interviewing they will face in the near future as they become settled," she explained. Among the lessons she presents to her students are instructions on how to identify themselves and family members using the English language; questions about numbers, birthdays and parts of the body, and how to ask and answer questions in an interview situation.

"With the kids," she said, "I try to play games that evoke this information rather than utilize a traditional blackboard classroom."

Despite the horrors the refugees lived through prior to their arrival in the United States, Ms. Kaplan said everyone is "very pleasant and very grateful for all the assistance they're receiving. The children are all enthusiastic in spite of the troubles they came from. They have a terrific spirit."

She added that there are moments when some of the adults "might pull you aside and speak to you with a shake of their head as if to ask, 'What's next in my life?,' but they're in as good a spirit as possible under the circumstances."

"The children seem more shielded from the sadness, although they've seen everything," she noted.

The atmosphere at Fort Dix is pretty informal, Ms. Kaplan said. "People spend most of their day outdoors. The kids play in the playground, while the adults tend to gather at picnic tables and talk."

With the conflict over and refugees beginning to return to Kosovo, what will become of those at Fort Dix? "The last I heard," she said, "refugees are not coming in anymore. Those that are here are beginning to leave Fort Dix to be resettled in the United States. For the time being, they're not going back, but many of them plan on returning eventually. What actually happens to them, no one knows for sure."

Local Alumni Association Installs Slate of Officers

SCOTCH PLAINS — At the last meeting of the Scotch Plains-Fanwood High School Alumni Association, new officers were installed for 1999-2000.

The installed officers are Elena Harper, President; Kristi Murdock Hawkins, First Vice President; Kathy Geary Van Horn, Treasurer; William Pearce, Recording Secretary; Laura DiFrancesco Swidersky, Corresponding Secretary; Diane Kuntstmann Carboy, John Gausz and Marie DiFrancesco Leppert, all trustees.

The Alumni Association is a group of graduates of Scotch Plains-

Fanwood High School whose aim is to encourage scholarship, sportsmanship, sports, recreation and education in students.

The association has an active Web site, which is a source of information for alumni throughout the country. The association meets at the high school the third Tuesday of September, November, January, March and May.

The meetings include a program and refreshments. The public is invited to attend.

For further information, please call (908) 233-3829.



NEW OFFICERS...At the last meeting of the Scotch Plains-Fanwood High School Alumni Association, new officers were installed for 1999-2000. Pictured, left to right, are: Elena Harper, President; Kristi Murdock Hawkins, First Vice President, and Kathy Geary Van Horn, Treasurer.

Your Plan Should Fit Your Lifestyle

AT&T Understands

FREQUENT OR BUSINESS USER

AT&T Digital One Rate

Now. Anytime Day or Night. Anywhere In The Country. You Can Make And Receive Calls For

**ONE LOW RATE
NO MORE ROAMING CHARGES
NO MORE LONG DISTANCE CHARGES**

FREE

Call Waiting/Forwarding Voicemail, Caller ID, Alarm & Currency Converter

• Up To 3 Hours Talk Time
• Up to 8 Days Standby Time

AT&T DIGITAL ONE RATE PLANS

Minutes Included/Airtime

600 \$89.99/Month

Minutes Included/Airtime

1000 \$119.99/Month

Minutes Included/Airtime

1400 \$149.99/Month

**We Now Carry
The New
Motorola
TalkAbout
2-way Radio!**

**CELLULAR
SIGNAL
PLUS**

Nokia
5160



\$29.99/MONTH
INCLUDES
200 MINUTES

\$39.99/MONTH
INCLUDES
300 MINUTES

All NJ-State Coverage

Requires a dual mode dual band phone

CASUAL OR EMERGENCY USER

With AT&T Wireless Services You'll Receive

UNLIMITED OFF-PEAK AIRTIME

Free Nights/Weekends \$9.99 per month on Select Plus plan

FREE DIGITAL PCS FEATURES

VoiceMail with Message Waiting Indicator, Caller ID, PCS Paging with activation on any AT&T Digital PCS rate plan.

Nokia 5160 Now Only **\$129**
Instant Rebate **\$20**
Final Cost **\$109**

**OR Trade Your
Instant Rebate for
Your Choice of Colors!**

Special Applies to New Activation Only

Monday - Friday 9 to 5:30 • Thursday until 8pm • Saturday 10 to 5:30

132 East Broad St • Westfield • (908) 789-5302

AT&T Wireless Services
Authorized Dealer

Summer Counts at Union County College!

Earn extra credits towards your degree.

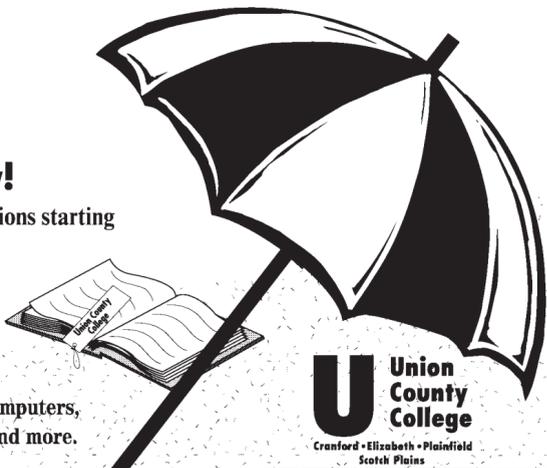
Choose from 3-12 week sessions.

**Attend class at convenient locations.
or learn at home with telecourses.**

Register Now!

Choose from class sessions starting in May, June or July.

Classes in Business, Computers, Liberal Arts, Science and more.



Call (908) 709-7500 and register today!

COMCAST @ Home High Velocity Internet Service. It's Here.

- No More Dialing
- No More Busy Signals
- No More Phone Lines
- Internet Using TV Cable
- Instantaneous Connection
- 3 E-Mail Addresses



http://westfieldnj.com speed@westfieldnj.com 908-654-4100 (24 hrs)