

Perinton entrepreneur revitalizing the 19th Ward

Local entrepreneur invests in building, neighborhood's future.

Matthew Daneman, Staff writer

In one form or another, 332-336 Arnett Blvd. has long been home to commerce.

Part of the row building housed The Creator's Hands gift store and gallery for a number of years. When the business showcasing works by American artists and craftspeople moved out in 2005, the storefront windows looked out on some far less savory capitalism, with occasional drug dealing out front.



Rebecca and Glenn Fadner III of Ogden operate Kingdom Ventures Inc., which sells imports from developing nations and is part of "The Arnett" business center in the 19th Ward.

Today the space in the 83-year-old building, just west of the Arnett branch of the Rochester Public Library, is hosting a family of businesses and business services aimed at a target audience of a few square blocks of southwest Rochester.

Inside the operation called "The Arnett," a small coffee shop sits alongside a copy shop. Diners at the cajun/creole restaurant The French Quarter Cafe eat steps away from a credit counseling service and a business consulting operation.

The idea is to provide both a series of niche businesses lacking in the city's 19th Ward, such as higher-end retail, and the needed training and services to help other businesses launch in the area.

The neighborhood "has a lot of good housing value," said David Dey, who created The Arnett and runs a pair of operations there with his wife, LaDonna. "But on the other hand, it has a series of challenges. It's an ideal area to launch this model."

Included in The Arnett, in addition to the cafe, are:

- Kingdom Ventures Inc., which imports such goods as handbags and ceramics from developing nations and sells them through the Internet, craft shows and in its small retail space.
- Risego Inc., an entrepreneurship training service for youths, and the Institute for Social Entrepreneurship, a similar training and consulting service for adults.
- Lighthouse Copy & Business Services, a copy shop.
- His Blends Coffee Shop.
- A Caroline Creative, an event planner.
- Creative Counseling & Budgeting.
- Fine A.R.T.S., a gallery.

The business mix was, in large part, deliberate, said Dey, 42, of Perinton, as he did an analysis of businesses within roughly a four-block radius to see what particular niches needed to be filled.

The people behind those businesses came in through various ways, Dey said. He met Glenn and Rebecca Fadner of Kingdom Ventures through church.

Rochester couple Don and Natalie Gordon of Lighthouse Copy & Business Center got involved after Natalie Gordon, who works at a nearby doctor's office, saw the renovation work going on at The Arnett.

Lighthouse is equipped with desktops, printers and a copier, all donated, said Don Gordon, 46, with its target audience being businesses on the city's west side that don't have easy access to one of the major chains, such as Kinko's.

For Nick Brown, 33, of Penfield, opening The French Quarter Cafe is the culmination of seven years of work doing catering locally and in the South. The restaurant opened in May.

"It's a good neighborhood," Brown said. "The bad rap is a few kids here and there."

Dey's Risego Inc. bought the building for \$150,000 in August 2005 to develop it, as his Institute for Social Entrepreneurship already existed in the back of the building. After failed attempts to get outside funding, Dey in late 2007 began paying for renovation work out of his own pocket. He also started rounding up donations of goods and materials, from office equipment for the copy shop to restaurant equipment for the cafe.

Daniel Ocke of Ocke Construction in Ontario, Wayne County, did the flooring work. The impetus, he said, was Risego's focus on youths.

"If Rochester fails, (the area's suburbs) are going to fail," Ocke said.

There are four upstairs apartments, which Dey said he plans to rent out to help cover costs.

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