

News COVER STORY

The end of the book

Books on Vernon set to close up shop this summer

FOUAD EGBARIA, Editor

The curtain is closing and the story nears its final chapter for a Glencoe business that has served as a house of literature and theater for nearly a quarter of a century.

Books on Vernon, Glencoe's lone bookstore, will close this summer, with its last day on June 30, co-owner Linda Illes confirmed — “without a bang or a whimper,” she said.

Illes purchased the store on 664 Vernon Ave. in

“Nobody’s life is ever going to be changed because they bought a really good pair of jeans ... well, maybe, if they’re really good.”

Mitchell Moore—*Books on Vernon co-owner on how he believes selling books is unlike selling anything else*

2004, making her a first-time business owner. She and her son, co-owner Mitchell Moore, work together at the store, which Illes calls a “true mom-and-pop.”

Writers Theatre for-

merly put on shows in the intimate space at the back of the bookstore. The theater company’s move to its new Tudor Court space this year, then, is one factor contributing to the bookstore’s closing (the



Linda Illes, co-owner of Books on Vernon, 664 Vernon Ave., in the store April 27. The independent bookstore, which opened in 1992, will close for good June 30. FOUAD EGBARIA/22ND CENTURY MEDIA

company’s sublease of the space ends June 30). The theater’s move also led to a loss in foot traffic in the store.

“The real driving factor [behind the closing] is the theater, when they have a

show here — which is going on 10 months out of the year — that puts another 450-plus people through the store every week,” Illes said. “The over-the-counter sales, a large amount of that is Writers Theatre patrons.” Illes said they’ve tracked book sales in the past, splitting sales made during performances versus the rest of the day. She estimated about 25-30 percent of sales came during Writers Theatre performances.

“That’s a big amount to lose,” she said.

She also cited the nationwide recession of 2007-08, a downturn that “hit everybody, especially [small] retailers.” The February 2015 closing of Einstein’s Bagels, previously at 682 Vernon Ave., also affected the store’s weekend sales, she said.

“We really noticed on the weekends, like New Trier graduation ... when people have family in town, they don’t know what to do with them on Sunday mornings,” she laughed. “So they send them all out for bagels, and they all shop. Bookstores are always open and they’re wonderful browsing places.”

The physical layout of the space didn’t help, she said, as the building doesn’t have back-door access (the alley behind it is privately owned).

“All of those things added together make it no longer financially viable to stay in business,” she said. “It’s a lot of factors.”

Illes, who grew up on a farm in north central Iowa for the first 12 years of her life and later spent 25 years as a registered nurse, jumped on the opportunity to purchase the store, founded in 1992 by Linda Wine, Diane Schwartz and Pat Rahman.

Writers Theatre Artistic Director Michael Halberstam praised the store for its role in the theater company’s early history.

“Our relationship with Books on Vernon has been a wonderful collaboration,” he said in a written statement. “I was first introduced to Pat Rahman, Linda Wine, and Diane Schwartz by a mutual friend, David Pence, with whom I served on a board (The Chicago Associates of the Stratford Festival). [Rahman] was particularly interested in starting a play

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*The Marshall family,
Glencoe*



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P.S.: Grandma and grandpa love to spoil us rotten.

HELP! The Glencoe Anchor is in search of more pets. To submit your own Pet of the Week, send a photo and info to fouad@glenceoanchor.com or 60 Revere Drive Suite 888, Northbrook, Ill 60062

Scouts earn their stripes

Six Glencoe residents reach rank of Eagle Scout

ELEANOR BLACK
Freelance Reporter

For the first time in three years, six members of Glencoe's Boy Scout Troop 28 earned the rank of Eagle Scout, the highest rank awarded in the Boy Scouts of America.

More than 100 family and friends came to celebrate the Scouts during a ceremony at the Takiff Center on April 24.

The six scouts — Drew Suchsland, Stephen Schneider, Jacob Mehlman, Chris Temple, Julius Shapiro and Nicky Kacena — are currently seniors at New Trier High School, and have been in the Scouts together since the fifth grade (though some

started in first grade).

Their bond as Scouts and friends was evident, as they decided to wait until all six of them achieved the Eagle Scout rank to have a ceremony as a group. The first to meet his requirements was Suchsland in September 2014, and the last was Kacena, two weeks before the ceremony.

Three Scouts — Mehlman, Temple and Shapiro — did their service project at the Little House of Glencoe. Two Scouts decided to do their service project on the Green Bay Trail, where both said they spend quite a bit of time — Suchsland, as a long-distance runner, and Schneider as “an avid bike rider.”

Finally, Kacena did his project at North Shore United Methodist Church, where he installed benches and made landscaping improvements at the church's



Eagle Scout inductees say the Pledge of Allegiance during a ceremony honoring six Glencoe residents for reaching the rank of Eagle Scout on April 24, at the Takiff Center in Glencoe. JILL DUNBAR/22ND CENTURY MEDIA

side entrance. During his speech, he described a specific moment to represent his scouting experience: staring at the stars at Warren Dunes, thinking about the peacefulness of the wilderness and how much scouting meant to him over the years.

Tom Temple, a former scoutmaster of the boys, reminisced about their time together, describing the difficulty of becoming an Eagle Scout, especially

as Scouts grow older and enter high school, and obstacles start to get in the way of scouting. Despite that, the group that started 11 years ago — when the boys were “snot-nosed, confident little squirts,” Temple joked — created six Eagle Scouts.

“Why? It's because of their support for each other and their encouragement of each other,” Tom Temple said. “In other words, friendship.”

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reading group as she was a fine playwright, having been successfully produced at the Organic Theatre in its heyday.

“I don't think any of them had expected a fully-fledged theatre company to spring up in their spacious back room, but it certainly proved to be a mutually beneficial relationship. I am eternally grateful to the three of them and their husbands for their generosity and support in [our] first few years of operation. They subsidized our rent, our basic needs (power, chairs etc.) and promoted us to their patron base with great passion and commitment.”

Longtime Glencoe resident Roberta Rubin knows

a thing or two about the business of running an independent bookstore. Rubin owned The Book Stall in Winnetka for 31 years, purchasing it in 1982 and sold it off in 2013 before retiring.

In an industry battling a number of market factors — Amazon being the biggest challenge to independent bookstores, Rubin said — the impending closing of Glencoe's only bookstore is sad news to the former longtime bookstore owner, who called independent bookstores places that not only sell books, but serve as a “gathering place” to discuss everything from literature to current events.

“It's very sad,” Rubin said of the store's closing. “I feel it will tarnish the community ... [that] a

bookstore is a place where people love to gather to talk about books, about words, about literature, about important things that happen in life.”

Moore, a lifelong reader, called the closing “depressing” — he'll miss the opportunity to give longtime customers book recommendations, especially one mother and her three kids (two daughters, one son), who regularly come in to find a book for their own family book club.

“I will miss that,” he said. “I will miss coming up with a good book for them.”

Selling books is unlike selling anything else, he argued.

“This is the only area [of retail] where you can sell something to someone that

could change their lives,” Moore said, citing “Pride and Prejudice,” which he first read in eighth grade, as a book that “completely altered” his worldview.

“Nobody's life is ever going to be changed because they bought a really good pair of jeans ... well, maybe, if they're really good,” he added with a laugh. “Selling a book to someone is really unique.”

As for the future, Illes joked that she expects her garden to be in much better shape.

“That's what I'm hoping for,” she said. “I'm going to have to find something else to do because I really do have to have things to get up and do during the day ... I'll find something else to do. There's always something you can find to do.”

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