

As drugstore chains proliferate, Hull holds onto an independent pharmacy

By Matt Haraden

As large chains have taken over the pharmacy industry, very few cities and towns still have locally owned shops. Hull is among the rare communities in Massachusetts with a successful, family-run drugstore – Nantasket Pharmacy, owned by Hullonians Rocky and Jane Tenaglia.

Tenaglia, who grew up in Quincy, earned his degree from the Massachusetts College of Pharmacy. When looking to run his own business, he purchased in 1986 the former Moulton's Pharmacy, which was on the first floor of the building that now houses The Parrot restaurant. Moulton's was owned by the sister of Tenaglia's wife, Jane, who grew up in Hull.

About five years after moving the pharmacy to Kenberma, he bought a property at 480 Nantasket Ave. and built a new building, which is where the drugstore has been located since.

Along with his wife, Tenaglia owns three pharmacies across the South Shore – Nantasket Pharmacy, Scituate Pharmacy, and Hingham Centre Pharmacy. You can find Rocky at the Hull location most of the time, Jane at Scituate, and Tenaglia's sister, Lisa, runs the Hingham store.

The Tenaglias are also a part of the Northeast Pharmacy Service Corp., a group that represents pharmacies across New England to get them the best prices on goods from vendors. As of now, the company represents more than 300 pharmacies across Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut, New Hampshire, Maine, and Vermont.

In addition to filling prescriptions, the pharmacy sells over-the-counter medicines, personal-care products, baby items, greeting cards, and most household health needs. The pharmacy also operates a compounding service, creating customized medications to suit customers' needs.

"If we don't have it, you don't need it!" Tenaglia says, displaying the sense of humor his customers have come to appreciate over the years.

Nantasket Pharmacy is also a place for some young people interested in the field to get their first jobs. Tenaglia says that the Hull store has generated at least 12 to 15 pharmacists over the years.

"It's amazing to me because it's such a small town," he says.

Meanwhile in Scituate, Jane reports that many of her staff members have been with the store for more than 15 years. The pharmacy employs a lot of working mothers and does its best to accommodate their schedules. "I appreciate whatever



Pharmacist Rocky Tenaglia (pictured) and his wife Jane are the proprietors of three successful, family-owned drugstores in Hull, Scituate, and Hingham. Nantasket Pharmacy has been a fixture in Hull for decades. [Skip Tull photo]

they can do," she says.

One challenging aspect of today's insurance policies is that many people are forced to either go to a big chain pharmacy or order their prescriptions through the mail.

"A lot of the insurance plans require people to go to certain places a lot of the times," Tenaglia explains. "They can come to us one or two times a year and then they're forced to either go through mail order or go to a CVS."

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Despite this challenge, Tenaglia still enjoys having customers come in and getting to know them on a personal level.

"I love the people," he says. "Forget the pharmacy part; I just love the people. It's a blast working."

There have been a few changes to operations at Nantasket Pharmacy in accordance with the restrictions imposed by the coronavirus pandemic. Tenaglia says that employees have been doing more deliveries and curbside pickups than ever before because some customers are not as comfortable with walking into the store.

"If somebody doesn't feel comfortable coming in, I get that," he says. "So we have no problem bringing it out or bringing it to their house."

Tenaglia acknowledges that the store is having trouble stocking certain items, such as paper towels, toilet paper, and hydrogen peroxide. However, the pharmacy was recently approved to offer in-store vaccinations, and Tenaglia is hopeful that when a COVID-19 vaccine is approved the whole town can be vaccinated at his drugstore.

Another difficulty that smaller pharmacies are facing is ordering merchandise. Tenaglia says most suppliers are imposing minimums on how much can be ordered at once, which makes it more difficult for a smaller drugstore to stock adequate supplies of what it needs.

Asked if they have any plans to expand in the future, Rocky and Jane seem happy with the current size of their business. They note that their two daughters chose another profession; both are marine biologists.

"If something came up, I guess we would take a look at it, but I think we're pretty happy with what we have now," Jane says.

Rocky has a similar opinion and envisions no immediate expansion.

"I don't think so anymore – only because of my age. I'm getting up there," he says but adds, "I'm very comfortable right now." HT

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