

## UPTOWN, continued from Page A1

"I have the confidence we can meet future challenges, with his help in preparing me," Elliott said, motioning to Nardi. "It's time for the training wheels to come off. We will solve problems as we keep moving forward."

Replied Nardi: "Keep rocking."

Nardi, 57, hasn't indicated what his next step is. He said the longstanding joke between the two men was the moment Nardi left the business, he would open a new music store right across River Road.

One thing is certain, however: Nardi won't be coming in every day. A going away celebration party was set for Wednesday evening this week, after the *Keizertimes* went to press.

"Once we reach the end of the month, my day-to-day time here will cease," Nardi said. "I'm not quite sure what the next adventure will be. My wife works from home. Once I decompress, I will decide on the next venture. I don't have to jump right into something."

Over the years Nardi, Keizer's 1999 Merchant of the Year, had looked at selling to Elliott, but the timing wasn't right. The sale finally took place last year.

"The process has been going amazingly well," Nardi said. "Paul has been part of how we became what we are. He's been alongside me."

Nardi recalls a busy time in the life of his company.

"It was in 2007 or 2008, when the economy went weird," he said. "We had just

bought this building. We'd had 15 years of steady growth, then things got strange. We'd made a huge investment with the building and started talking about bringing Paul in as a partner. We realized we would have to do something."

Though business was hampered by the recession and a sale didn't happen, Nardi said the lessons made both him and Elliott better business people. When the two started talking seriously again a few years later about a sale, things went smoothly once a second arrangement was worked out.

"Basically it was a title change," Nardi said. "I became the director of accountability and he became the president of the company. Janis (Elders) was transitioned to an administrative role. There was a divine hand on all of this. It's been a really, really smooth transition."

For Nardi, there was no one else he considered selling to.

"I couldn't think of a better person to take the reigns and move this company forward," Nardi said. "Paul has a servant's heart and he loves to serve people. As my position was more in the back, Paul has been our company face for a long time."

For Elliott, taking over the music store was years in the making.

"I talked long and hard with my wife (Karen)," Elliott said. "She knew this was my lifelong dream, but we had to get things in position financially. We were saving like we never did before, getting our financial ducks in a row. All of these aspects were new to me. Two years ago things were in place as far as finances. Then



KEIZERTIMES/Craig Murphy

The Uptown Music staff of (from left) Janis Elders, Paul Elliott, Wes Smedsrud, Miriam Butler, Jim Nardi and Robert Keyes pose for a group shot. Not pictured: Shane Hall.

it took a year to put together the documents to make this happen."

Elliott laughed when remembering being asked what his goal was when he took the business over.

"My goal is not to mess it up," Elliott said. "Jim and his wife Sylvia have built a community staple here over the past 24 years."

Nardi quickly adds his two cents.

"We wouldn't be here without his contributions," Nardi said of Elliott.

How would Elliott describe taking over the business? "It was really exciting and terrifying at the same time," he said. "But I'm surrounded by the best group of people."

Things haven't been too bad; Elliott reports sales rose 8 percent last year compared to the previous year.

Nardi points to some changes Elliott implemented as at least part of the reason.

"There are some new things to make us more competitive," Nardi said. "There's a bigger online component now, with a new website and online payments. Paul kept the good and is building on top of that."

Elliott said he simply followed advice from his mentor.

"What Jim has taught me is to put the people and process in place to help make it easier to do business with us," Elliott said. "It takes time to implement new technology and

there are growth pains, but it's easier for us now and for those who want to do business with us. I try to approach this with great humility. I'm humbled by the opportunity given to me. My previous 16 years was just practice for this."

Nardi noted the difference in starting a new business versus taking one over.

"We started from zero," Nardi said. "We invested a total of \$2,500. We invested more over time. It was a long and slow process to build it."

Elliott noted the difference in starting point for him.

"Jim was able to start it small and learn along the way," Elliott said. "He didn't have to jump aboard a large business and go on a merry-go-round. I just grabbed on and Jim pulled me into the center of the merry-go-round, where it moves slower and I can see what's going on."

Elliott, 46, recalls when the reality of the change hit him.

"When it sunk in is when I did payroll, when I signed Jim's check," Elliott said. "Then it was real. There's no way I'd be here today without the support of my wife and my crew here."

Nardi looks back at the last 24 years with fondness.

"I feel blessed," he said. "Paul and I both came out of performing backgrounds. We're music people at the heart. We're fortunate to make a living doing something we love."

## Clem not prepared for the President's Award



Dan Clem walks to the stage to accept the President's Award on Jan. 31 at the Keizer First Citizen Banquet.

KEIZERTIMES/Craig Murphy

By **CRAIG MURPHY**  
*Of the Keizertimes*

Having recently stepped down from public office, Dan Clem figured there was no reason to dress up for the Keizer First Citizen Awards Banquet on Jan. 31.

Besides, the former Salem City Councilor didn't anticipate winning anything so a sweater, jeans and tennis shoes seemed to be safe enough.

But Audrey Butler, president of the Keizer Chamber of Commerce, had a different plan.

Butler surprised Clem with the President's Award.

Butler called Clem, who serves as chair of the chamber's Government Affairs Committee, the "iron link" between her and legislation impacting Keizer.

"He's the man who has elevated the chamber to a new level," Butler said.

Clem joined the chamber last June.

"I am truly humbled to be welcomed into Keizer in such a wonderful fashion," said Clem, who recognized wife Debbie for her support. "The public deserves our best and I hope to continue to give my best. I'm always reminded by Audrey's caring heart and her sense of volunteerism. That's the great thing about this community, you just volunteer so much. Audrey says it and it's absolutely true. She lives it and the community lives it."

"We vote once or twice a year, but when we volunteer we vote daily about the kind of community we want to live in," he added. "I'm very proud

to be part of Keizer, thank you."

Butler, who as chamber president had the sole call on who got the award, outlined why she chose Clem.

"The last six months have been more than I anticipated," Butler said. "I can't wait to see the flourish in growth we will have in the next six months. As I began the journey of your chamber president six months ago, I knew I was going to find a few avenues I would struggle in. Like they say, you're only as strong as your weakest link. I know my strengths and my weaknesses. When you identify the weak points in you, you can only improve them. Those weak points can only be made stronger."

After returning to his seat, Clem still couldn't believe he was leaving the event with a new clock.

"I'm shocked," he said. "Keizer is such a wonderful place because of the people. I'm deeply humbled and honored by this award."

Debbie noted she didn't know about the award beforehand, but she didn't sound terribly surprised based on what her husband does.

"This is nobody who loves their community more than Dan does," Debbie said. "He thinks of the whole area as his community. He does a lot of good stuff."

Clem took the good natured ribbing about his somewhat casual attire in stride and pointed to a valid reason.

"I didn't wear a suit and tie because I'm out of office," Clem said.

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*RIVERfair is presented by Making Keizer Better Foundation, a non-profit organization*

**puzzle answers**

8	4	5	1	9	6	2	3	7
2	3	9	4	7	8	1	5	6
1	6	7	5	2	3	8	9	4
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7	9	8	6	4	1	5	2	3
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9	5	1	3	6	4	7	8	2
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OLDIE	ALAR	OVEN			
RIATA	CETE	LIMO			
TATAR	RAID	MAIN			
SMALL	WORLD	ALTO			
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CHAMPION	NURSED				
LARA	SLOT	MITER			
ABET	TILES	VERO			
RANCH	SATE	EVIL			
ASTHMA	NEWSREEL				
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