

Reflections to Close

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The inside is anything but simple, with posters of upcoming cultural and community events arranged on the counters and imported African art lining the windows.

Since opening in 1995, residents have visited the coffee house to grab a fresh cup of coffee, enjoy a homemade slice of cake or peruse through books about African American history. Others venture to the small business to say hello to long time friends, play a game of chess or dive into political debates about the current state of the country.

"Throughout the years there have been music shows, art shows, baby showers, and retirement parties," said Owner Gloria McMurtry with a smile. "We have had it all."

Although she never thought she would own a coffee shop, McMurtry said she is beyond grateful for the experiences and customers from throughout the past 17-years.

Today, McMurtry said the name Reflections has stuck true to its name. "It was always reflections of how things used to be," she said, referring to a line in a song from the 60s. "The mission was always to feature local artists and promote the community."

"I wanted Reflections to mirror a traditional coffee shop, where people gather to talk and discuss, she said. "It has never been just a stop," she said.

Although she is thankful for everyone who has supported the business throughout the years, the changing neighborhood and tough economy has made business difficult. "We are closing because business isn't sustaining any longer," she said. "Gentrification, competition and the economy—when they come into succession, it becomes hard for a business to sustain it."

McMurtry said she has watched as the neighborhood surrounding her business changed over the years. "Unfortunately, the audience and neighborhood we first were, is no longer around because of gentrification," she said. "But it was kind of a natural force of events and it happened all across the nation."

At the time she opened the coffee shop, there was no other place like it around, she said. "New people have moved into the neighborhood, but it used to be primarily African American. Now it is younger white people."

But northeast has always attracted a good caliber of people, she said, adding that she is proud of the mark Reflections has made within the community. "To me, it has always had a real homey feeling," she said. "My customers are great."

"In the state of Oregon, this is probably the best and most central ethnic place. Everybody doing something can advertise it here," said Uli Hardiman, a regular of

Reflections for the past few years. "There is nothing else around here that facilitates this type of thing."

"It is a social place for me to talk philosophy, religion and look at some of the pretty women," said Daryl Griffith, who was taking pictures outside Reflections last week. He said he remembers 17-years-ago, when he helped install the

realize how great of a need there was for a place like Reflections until later.

Now, however, she can see how important Reflections became for the community.

According to McMurtry, the building is owned by the city, which has the final say in what the space will become in the future. "I really hope it (the property) stays what it

is. It would be great for the community. I would hate to see more police facilities in here," she said.

Although she is sad to see Reflections close, McMurtry said the end is both bitter and sweet. "It has been a long time of doing the same thing, and I look forward to taking time off and enjoying the summer. But I'll pop up somewhere."

For years, she has watched organizations hold meetings at the store and talk about the services and events they plan for the community.

Although she has felt a part of each of them in her own way, she said she is excited to soon have the time to visit some of the places discussed. "Like Groundworks Portland," she said. "Maybe I will go down there and help with the garden."

She invites everyone from throughout Portland to visit Reflections in its last week. To the community who has made Reflections the space it is today, she said, "A great big thank you, and a lot of hugs and kisses."



PHOTO BY MINDY COOPER/THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

Reflections coffee shop and Talking Drum bookstore has been a staple for the northeast community since opening its doors in 1995. The small business will close this week on Saturday, June 30, after serving the community for more than 17-years.

countertops and paint the floors.

Abassi Myrack, 18, has worked at Reflections for the past four months. "I like the environment," he said. "There are nice people. I like to come to feel the breeze of information."

Myrack, who grew up in northeast Portland, said he likes to hear the debates, what customers have to say and their beliefs about the world. "It (Reflections) kept the little culture left within the community. There used to be a lot up and down Alberta and Killingsworth," he said. "I am proud to be a part of it. There are other places, but for me, this is my home."

Myrack said he has also truly enjoyed working with McMurtry. "She is a strong woman, nice lady and she is very supportive of the community," he said.

Ulsi agreed. "This woman has invested a lot to create an atmosphere," he said. "She (Gloria) has got so many talents. I don't know how she does it."

"She gives all these talents to the community. She is just kind and understanding."

When McMurtry first opened her business it was the only coffee house north of Broadway. She didn't

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