

https://observer-reporter.com/news/localnews/arc-human-services-moves-to-canonsburg/article_60167826-2039-11ea-a7fd-5b56b94039e3.html

FEATURED

Arc Human Services moves to Canonsburg

Katie Anderson

Dec 17, 2019



Katie Anderson/Observer-Reporter

Steve Brody stands in front of his family's furniture store, which has been on West Pike Street in Canonsburg since 1953. He's closing the store and selling the building to Arc Human Services.

Katie Anderson

A longtime furniture store in Canonsburg's business district will be closing its doors, only to have the iconic building repurposed for a good cause.

Arc Human Services of Washington County is purchasing the three-story building that's housed Brody's Furniture since the 1930s.

"What we really wanted was a space in town where we'd be visible," said Arc's CEO, Ed Picchiarini. "We wanted Arc Human Services to be a part of the Washington County community."

The start of this repurposing marks the end of an era for Steve Brody, whose grandfather, Herman Brody, started the furniture store across the street in 1931. Three years later they moved into the larger three-story building at 111 W. Pike St.

"It's going to be difficult walking out the door on the last day, but progress means change, and I'm keeping a positive attitude," Steve Brody said. "I know that my father and grandfather would approve of this."

His father, Herbert Brody, took over the business in 1947 and ran it until his retirement in 2000. Steve started at the store in 1991, after working "in the corporate world." The family always took pride in the quality furniture they sold, Steve Brody said, "but over the years, the public has migrated by focusing on price with disregard for quality."

Steve recently celebrated his 60th birthday, and decided it may be time to "pursue other things."

"The opportunity came as such, and this was for a good cause," he said. "I believe strongly in Arc and what they stand for and the timing just seemed right."

Picchiarini said that with the help of Canonsburg Mayor Dave Rhome and borough council President R.T. Bell, the nonprofit looked at several places in Canonsburg. They had problems finding someone with enough parking for the 60 employees they'll be bringing to the building.

"This location was perfect for us," he said of the Brody's Furniture building.

Picchiarini said Arc plans to move about 30 employees from each of its Washington locations – the administrative building it rents at Meadow Pointe Building, 470 Johnson Road, North Strabane Township, and the training center it owns at 270 Country Club Road, Meadow Lands.

"We made a decision to coordinate our offices," Picchiarini said.

Arc used to have a workshop space at the Meadow Lands location, where local companies would bring in work or projects. The individuals served by Arc would complete the work and send it back to the companies, Picchiarini said.

He said Arc ended that workshop program over the summer, as the nonprofit is looking for more opportunities for “community integration,” he said.

The ground floor of Brody's, once Arc renovates, will be a sandwich café with an art gallery, according to a news release. Picchiarini said the café will be staffed partly by individuals supported by Arc, and the gallery will feature work by artists of all abilities, he said.

“Canonsburg is very family-friendly,” Picchiarini said in the release. “It also offers seasonal events like the July 4th parade, Oktoberfest and Christmas activities that provide opportunities in which people of all abilities can actively participate.”

The floors below and above the ground floor will be used for office space, Picchiarini said. The renovations are expected to begin in February with the hope of moving in by October. Picchiarini said they'll need to make the building ADA compliant by putting an elevator near the back of the building.

“There's a lot of space and there are a lot renovations that will need to be made, but it fits all the staff,” he said.

Earlier this year, the property was assessed at \$451,100, according to Washington County property records. The sale of the building is expected to close by the end of the year, Brody said.

“I think it's going to be great for Canonsburg,” he said.

Brody's downsized much of the inventory in the store, but would like to “liquidate what's left at bargain prices,” he said. He's considering moving the business back into the smaller vacant storefront across the street, where the business originated. If he does move there, he'd be selling more from a catalog concept rather than having such a large showroom with physical inventory, he said.

“The whole selling process has been a dream in terms of working with Arc,” Brody said. “I couldn't ask for a better partnership than Arc, and that means a lot to my family and I.”

Rhome also said in a news release that it's a great opportunity for the downtown area, as borough officials have been working to "cultivate business development."

"We are thankful for Arc's enthusiasm for the project and their investment in our community," Rhome said in the release.

Katie Anderson

Staff Writer