

# Capitola Book Café is closing

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Business has been around for more than three decades

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OF THE REGISTER-PAJARONIAN

**CAPITOLA** — The Capitola Book Café is closing its doors at the end of this month, putting a final period in a story that began more than three decades ago.

"We're sorry beyond words that we couldn't keep Capitola Book Café open for generations to come," co-owner Wendy Mayer-Lochtefeld stated in an open letter to her customers. "We gave it our all, and then some."

The announcement came Tuesday, but owners Mayer-Lochtefeld, Melinda Powers, Janet Leimeister, and Richard Lange have been fighting to keep the place open for years as Internet sales and a moribund economy slowed sales.

"There was a time when the store was filled with people all the time, but the bookstore business was different then," Mayer-Lochtefeld said.

The owners also contemplated shutting down in 2012, but a fundraising campaign rekindled customer support and gave them hope

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Tarmo Hannula/Register-Pajaronian

**Wendy Mayer-Lochtefeld, co-owner of the Capitola Book Café, is preparing for the permanent closure of the business by the end of the month.**

## BOOK

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that they might be able to retool into a smaller, pared-down version.

"We had a lot of almos,ts," Mayer-Lochtefeld said. "But at a certain point we just had to look at the fact that a long-term solution didn't seem to be in the cards."

The owners also tried shortening the store's hours, changing staffing schedules and all but eliminating their own salaries, in addition to several other fundraising efforts, all to no avail.

"There is only so long you can go before you admit you're kicking the can down the road," Mayer-Lochtefeld said.

Many bookstores that are surviving today tend to be smaller and specialize in certain genres such as mystery, she said.

They're also usually located in walk-up, "destination" locations.

"None of these are things we have," she said.

Mayer-Lochtefeld said Ow

Properties, which owns the building, has been generous as the owners struggled to stay open.

Opened in 1980 as a then-unique café-bookstore combo, it was run for more than two decades by Marcia Rider, Kathy Kitsuse, Gwen Marcum and Judy Stenovich. That group is still known as "the Ladies," and even after the new owners took over in 2007, they kept returning to help.

"They've been a part of the store since they left," Mayer-Lochtefeld said.

Now, as the clock winds down to the Feb. 28 closing date, the owners are hoping to unload the thousands of books still in stock.

"The best way you can pay tribute to this magical place is to leave it the way you did on your best day here, with a pile of books in your hands," Mayer-Lochtefeld said.

Mayer-Lochtefeld described bookstores such as hers as "town squares for the public," which are becoming more difficult to find as shoppers increasingly go online to find books, or simply download them onto

electronic devices.

The bookstore has hosted dozens of authors throughout the years, and has served as a place for readers to simply sip a cup of coffee and read their book, or to meet with friends. Many have read to their children in the overstuffed chair located in the children's section.

"There are a lot of ways to buy books, but there aren't a lot of gathering places like this," she said. "Our customers loved coming here. They loved the homey feel, and that's really the loss."

Mayer-Lochtefeld said she'll miss seeing her longtime customers come in.

"Some of you grew up here, and have since brought your own children, even your grandchildren to Monday morning story hour," she stated in an open letter. "It makes us proud, which makes this decision all the more painful."

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*The Capitola Book Café is in the Kings Plaza Shopping Center at 1475 41st Avenue in Capitola. For information, call 462-4415, visit [www.capitolabookcafe.com](http://www.capitolabookcafe.com) or come to the store.*