

Mockingbird bookstore won't sing no more

Business - m
Owners say it takes a village

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APTOS — The closing of Mockingbird Books is not due to a lack of customer loyalty or ownership conflicts or even competition. It's simply that Aptos Village is no longer a suitable nest, according to owners Mark Bradlyn and Claire Sherard.

Bradlyn and Sherard will close their doors at the end of the year, leaving the village with no bookstore.

"We're leaving because there's no 'village' to compliment us," said Bradlyn, who points out that there are no real shops or restaurants to lure in more customers. While there is a nearby women's clothing store, most of their neighbors are service-oriented, like an insur-



Anna Bakalis/Register-Pajaronian

Katie Kelly, of Aptos, looks at books Friday at Mockingbird Books in the Aptos Village.

ance company and a real estate office.

"We don't have the shops to

make a village," said Sherard. "We gave it everything we had."

With a large section on non-

WRP 11-25-00
Western art and a strong collection of literature and non-fiction, the bookstore has attracted art enthusiasts, literary devotees and poets, as well as children of all backgrounds, said Sherard.

When they close, there will be no quiet area to leaf through old novels, flip through oversized art books or pour through critical essays on capitalism.

"This place feels more sacred than a church," said long-time customer and Watsonville resident, Elizabeth Tyler, "I've always found something I've loved in here."

Mockingbird Books opened in 1995 and filled a need for a used bookstore in the community, according to Bradlyn, who previously worked at Logo's bookstore in Santa Cruz for 16 years.

"I really wanted to emphasize the quality of books," said Bradlyn.

See BOOKS, page 8

BOOKS

From page 1

"I wanted it to be a showplace of interesting books."

Most of their stock comes from the community who sells books for money or for trade, creating a circle of close friends and a sense of community, according to Bradlyn. But their loyalty was not enough.

"If we had a village like Carmel or Los Gatos, we could have thrived," said Bradlyn, "but it hasn't happened."

Sherard points out that in the '70s there was a development plan for the village, which included open-air cafes, small businesses and a general store.

"The plan just sits down at the county building and no one does anything about it," said Sherard, "My fear is that big businesses will come in and the public won't be informed."

When customers found out they were closing, the owners were inundated with emails, phone calls, and letters. Their landlord even offered free rent.

"I feel as though I'm not alone — everyone says they're desirous in seeing a village," said Sherard.

While customers are buying their books, they often stop to say something encouraging to the owners, who have been in the village for more than five years.

"It's amazing how much we've meant to the community," said Sherard.