

# LOCAL NEWS

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## A Sweet Deal

New owner of Buckhart's doesn't plan on changing anything in the 99-year-old candy-making business

By DAVID PACINI

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A Santa Cruz native who has enjoyed treats from Buckhart's Candies for most of his 49 years recently bought the longtime East Cliff landmark business to keep its traditions intact.

"I'm here making Victoria cremes right now," said Stephen Ide, a former owner of Grady's Market in Capitola. "I've got people saying they've been coming in here since they were 4 years old, and they're now in their 80s and 90s. All the old-timers are so grateful the business is still open, and they've all got stories."

Last year in October, former owners Robert and Carol Clark decided to retire and sell the business for \$100,000 after running it for 30 years.

Ide, a former owner of Grady's Market in Capitola, caught wind of the opportunity to get into the candy business and started giving it some thought.

"This started to intrigue me the more I thought about it," said Ide. "I decided it's what I wanted to do. I see a lot of potential growth in the company. It seems light-hearted and a positive thing."

So with the close of escrow last month, the Clarks passed on the secret recipes for the confectioner's unique treats, handwritten by founder Harry Buckhart. Since then Ide has been putting in seven-day workweeks and getting a crash course in candy making from the master, John Nelson, the Clarks' son-in-law.

"The integrity will remain the same," said Ide. "I'm not going to change a thing. I'm proud of the quality of chocolates that we sell."

Buckhart's is perhaps best known for its Victoria creme, a rum-and-brandy flavored buttercream patty with walnuts. Other customer favorites include its English toffee, almond bark, peanut brittle and taffy. Although Ide bought the business, he did not buy the 12,500-square-foot property at 1-1231 E. Cliff Drive, which was listed for \$995,000 by Wagner Real Estate of Hollister. He has a one-year lease on the property.

Ide said the business turned 99 years old this year and has been in its distinctive East Cliff Drive building since 1936, when it replaced a tulip bulb nursery. The building still sports a large windmill on its roof from those days.

Ide has an appreciation for that long history in part because his family has long-owned local businesses. Stephen's parents, Robert and Helen, built and operated the Soquel Theater in 1948 and the Capitola Bowling Alley in 1950. They then bought Grady's Market, which he helped run until 1974.

Stephen's grandparents, Charles and Mary Ide, owned and operated the Osocales Theater, the Capitola Bowl, the Madera Bowling Alley and the Surf Bowl.

"Business is in our blood," Stephen said.

Ide plans a weeklong grand-opening celebration starting Sunday, complete with balloons and free candy samples. He also is gearing up for Mother's Day by stockpiling chocolate roses.

The store is open from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Monday through Saturday and Sundays from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m.

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**TOP:** Stephen Ide is looking forward to carrying on the 99-year-old tradition of sating local sweet teeth at Buckhart's Candies.

**LEFT:** Buckhart's windmill is an East Cliff Drive landmark.

Shmuel Thaler/  
Sentinel photos