

15 MINUTES

Leaving with love

When Lori Powers decided to open a business in Chico 26 years ago, she couldn't have predicted the role she would play in the community, in the fabric of downtown, and in the individual lives of so many people. She and her business partner, Becky Shadd, opened The Upper Crust Bakery & Cafe and ran it together until six years ago, when Shadd retired and Powers took the reins. Over the years, they established the business into a downtown staple, a longtime local favorite for pastries, coffee, fresh sandwiches and salads, its famous black bean chili and, of course, custom cakes. This year, it's Powers' turn to step away. She'll be retiring Dec. 31, handing over the keys to longtime employees Jeff and Shelby Plummer. Stop in at 130 Main St. and wish her well.

What got you into this business?
It started with a conversation with Becky Shadd, who had a business downtown already. And this place came up for sale a short time afterward, and I always had an interest in working with food. I had no formal training, but I was always interested, and I just thought that we could make a go of it. Be careful the conversations you have, because you never know where they're



PHOTO BY MEREDITH J. COOPER

going to lead—to wonderful, wonderful adventures.

What prompted you to decide to leave?

A combination of things. One is that I have loved coming to work these 26 years. Even when I know I'm in for a rough day, I love coming to work. I always wanted to leave feeling that way about the business I have so loved. I've witnessed others in my life who maybe overstayed their best time, and I want to leave and have that feeling of missing it because it was fun. Also, I feel really thrilled about the succession of the business because Jeff and Shelby Plummer, who have been working here for the last few years, have wanted the business, and it's the perfect time for them. It's their time to make a good run at it.

What will you miss most?

The people. And the adrenaline rush. There's something about when this place is busy and it's a little chaotic—it's one of those

environments that's terrible for some people and for those of us who thrive on that kind of energy, it's the bee's knees. I have run into wonderful people—who I've worked with, and who have come in as customers. I've always believed that the reason we're in business is for the customers. I've had such wonderful conversations over the years. I've made lifelong friends—how lucky is that?

What's next?

Just to enjoy where I live at a different pace sounds pretty divine right now. I want to have adventures, road trips, open-ended across the States, and to visit other locales on our planet. I think about volunteering. I've been able to give to the community through the business, but I haven't always been available to be there in person. I look forward to being a better participant in that way.

—MEREDITH J. COOPER
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THE GOODS

Hello, goodbye



by
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As is tradition this last week of the old year, I take some time to look back and try to encapsulate the biggest moments. What milestones did we reach? What new businesses opened up, and which ones shut down? Obviously, the Camp Fire has made waves, but I'll touch on those in the new year.

But before we say sayonara to 2018, let's take a quick look back at what it meant to the local business landscape.

HELLO: The Lab Bar and Grill opened where The End Zone used to be, and the Beverage District (or whatever we're calling it these days) added to its ranks: The Commons and Nor Cal Brewing. In other bar-related news, Bill's Towne Lounge opened up on Main Street. Owner Will Brady tells me he plans to put a pool table on the patio—some of the best news I've heard this month! Also, Casino Chico opened inside Quackers Fire Grill and Bar.

In caffeinated news, Chico Coffee Co. launched downtown, as did Tender Loving Coffee. Brave Coffee opened on Mangrove Avenue, a few blocks down from Bottoms Up Espresso. In sweets land, La Flor de Michoacan Paletaria y Neveria opened a third store and Shubert's Ice Cream & Candy opened a second space in the Chico Mall. We had a poke explosion, with two new spots—I Fish Poke Bar Thai Kitchen and LemonShark Poke. Hempful Farms opened, the first hemp and CBD store in town.

Nord Avenue experienced a fun flurry of new businesses, all food-related, (almost) all international: Taj Indian Restaurant, I Fish, Chicago's Pizza With a Twist, Coco's Ramen, Taste of Hmong and Midnite Munchies.

GOODBYE: Toys 'R Us was probably the biggest loss of 2018, but there were others, including Aaron Brothers Art & Framing. Herreid Music closed its Chico location in January. The silver lining here is that it opened the door to the Winchester Goose getting a bigger space. It plans to move—all the way across the street—in 2019. In Durham, the iconic Empire Club closed, with no sign of reopening anytime soon.

REOPENED/ADAPTED: The El Rey Theater reopened with a bang and kept making wonderful noise all year. The Fork in the Road food truck rally moved to DeGarmo Park after getting a rent increase at Manzanita Place. OM Foods moved from the Safeway shack to Broadway. Nearby, LaSalles reopened after 2 1/2 years of remodeling. Two Twenty closed and quickly reopened as Diamond Steakhouse, with new owners and a new chef. Lulus opened up The Outlet store on Broadway, selling clothes at a deep discount. The Watchman moved out of the mall and into downtown. Christian & Johnson Flowers and Gifts moved from its longtime digs on Big Chico Creek to East First Avenue.

Other news: Local retailers teamed up with the Chico Chamber of Commerce and the Chico Police Department to fight the growing problem of shoplifting. The effort seems to be making a difference. La Hacienda celebrated its 70th birthday this year as the oldest restaurant in Chico. La Comida celebrated 50 years here and, shortly thereafter, closed its Paradise location.

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