

Arnold pharmacy undeterred by plans for nearby CVS



By Matthew Cole, Staff

Arnold Professional Pharmacy

Owner and pharmacist Neil Patrick McGarvey prepares a prescription at the Arnold Professional Pharmacy in Arnold on Thursday morning.

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From tuna fish-flavored prescriptions for cats to chocolate-flavored liquid medicine for kids, Arnold Professional Pharmacy is known for the unique ways it customizes medicine.

It can make capsules by hand and create cream-based pain relievers all while offering free delivery all the way up to Baltimore.

“We basically can take any dose that the doctor wants and tweak it so that we can get it right to where it needs to be,” pharmacist and owner Neil Patrick McGarvey said.

But with plans for a CVS to replace Furniture Solution within walking distance of the Arnold Station store, McGarvey could stand to face some stiff competition. The proposed CVS would be the third pharmacy on one corner of Ritchie Highway.

The plans call for a 13,225-square-foot CVS to replace the 30,000-square-foot furniture store. The renovation project will cost \$1 million.

A building permit is pending the approval of a grading permit and a site development plan so that work can begin, according to the Anne Arundel County Office of Planning and Zoning. Messages left for CVS were not returned.

With a dozen employees, McGarvey's store is less than 2,000-square feet and serves about 250 people per day, he said.

McGarvey and his business partner, Jeremy Cundiff, said they had reservations when they heard about plans for the CVS about two years ago. Their pharmacy was still new and they had just invested so much into getting it off the ground.

"It was kind of deflating but we've had a lot of time to reconcile with it," McGarvey said.

Knowing they could do little to stop a CVS from coming in, the men decided to take a different approach: They would focus on customer service.

"Everyday we're going to come in and we're going to do whatever the hell it takes to make our people happy," McGarvey said.

"(CVS) might have the playing field stacked against us, might have a bigger store or more money behind them but they're not going to be better at what we do," Cundiff said. "They will not beat us."

McGarvey said his feelings on a chain coming in are not adversarial. In fact, both men worked at Safeway for decades. McGarvey opened the Arnold Professional Pharmacy after managing the supermarket pharmacy across the street.

McGarvey said he worked his way up the ranks in the supermarket — starting in the produce department — while attending college and pharmacy school at the University of Maryland.

Upon finishing school, he spent five years as a Safeway pharmacist, eventually landing at the Arnold store nine years ago. Shortly after that supermarket location was renovated, McGarvey decided he would go his own way. In May, Arnold Professional Pharmacy will be four years old.

For customer Sascha Lipczenko, the Arnold Professional Pharmacy offers him something chain stores do not: A relationship with everyone who comes through the door.

"They know their customers," Lipczenko said during a recent visit. "They're just very personal."

McGarvey said his work ethic will remain undeterred as he continues to serve the community at a job he loves.

"This is not the pharmacy that Neil and Jeremy built," McGarvey said. "This pharmacy is a pharmacy that Arnold built."