

OCTOBER 9, 1995

# DRUG TOPICS®

THE NEWSMAGAZINE FOR PHARMACISTS

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INSIDE**

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out swinging  
at High Noon**

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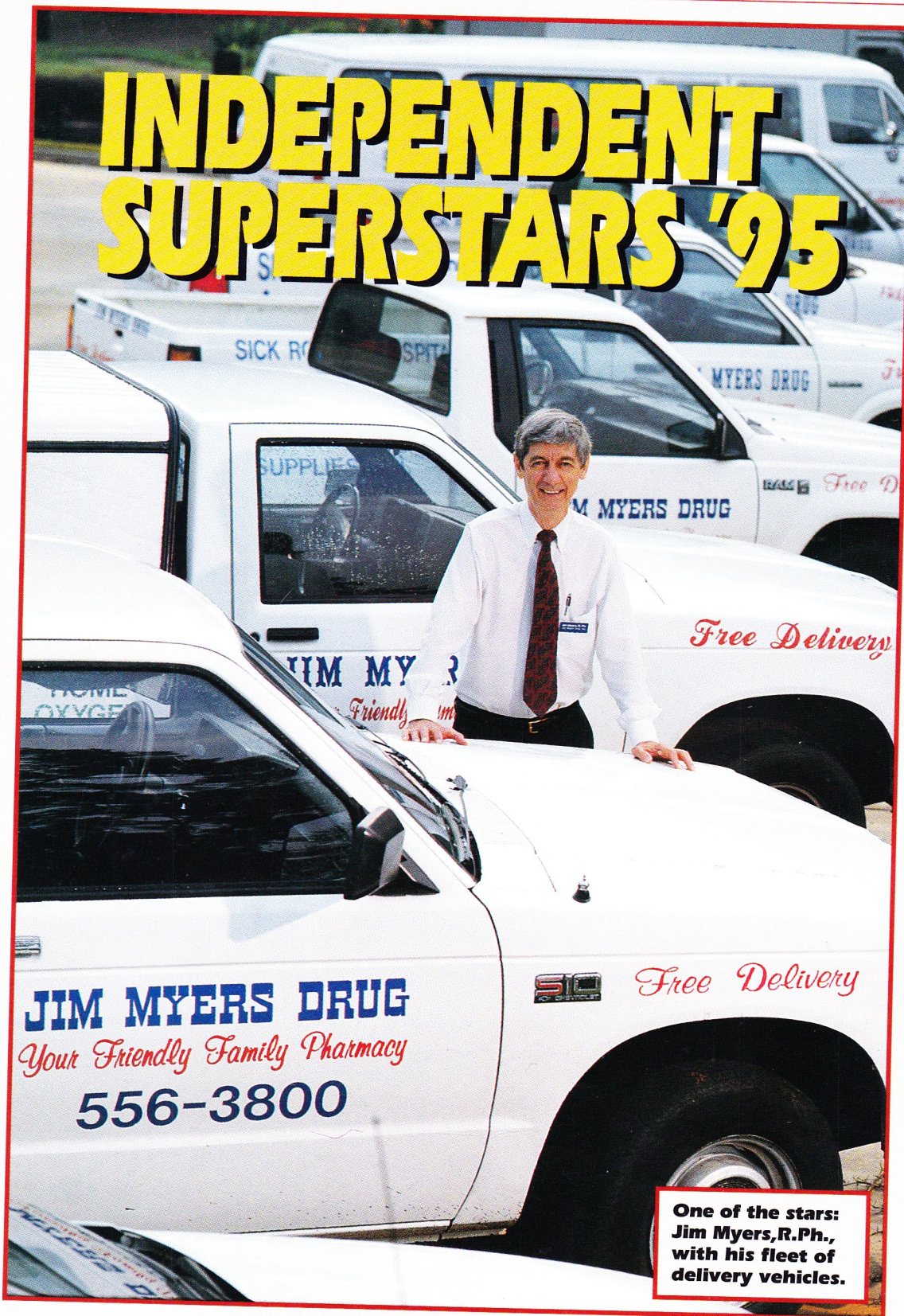
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**One of the stars:  
Jim Myers, R.Ph.,  
with his fleet of  
delivery vehicles.**



# INDEPENDENT SUPERSTARS 1995

**T**hough competition is stiffer than ever before, many independent drugstores are enjoying solid success. The 1995 Independent Superstars are outstanding examples of pharmacies that are making it despite tremendous odds against them.

For the 10th year, *Drug Topics* asked wholesalers to nominate independent pharmacies for their achievements in any of four categories:

- Exceptional pharmacy and nonpharmacy services
- Exceptional merchandising/advertising/promotion
- Overcoming competition
- Handling a crisis

The wholesalers nominated an interesting assortment of deserving pharmacies, thus proving that the entrepreneurial spirit is alive and well in independent pharmacy. The staffs of these

pharmacies have creatively promoted and merchandised their stores. They have gone out of their way to extend friendly and efficient service to their customers. They have learned how to compete against the best. They have remained calm in the face of unexpected disasters. *Drug Topics* salutes this year's Independent Superstars, who provide inspiration to all independent pharmacies.

## CATEGORY 1

### EXCEPTIONAL PHARMACY AND NONPHARMACY SERVICES

## Service with a smile

**T**o some, the competition offered by chain drugstores is insurmountable, but many independents are disproving this popular belief. Their winning attitudes and innovative ideas are helping them build strong businesses and gain loyal customers. Some even view their independence as a help, not a hindrance, in this competitive era of pharmacy.

Jim Myers, R.Ph., owner of Jim Myers Drug Inc. in Tuscaloosa, Ala., is an Independent Superstar with a healthy attitude. Despite the fact that there are 40 drugstores near his, he doesn't view them as a threat to his business. He views his pharmacy as a threat to the others. "We're their competition. If you don't take that attitude, you'll close your doors," said Myers, who said six independent drugstores in Tuscaloosa have closed in the past two years.

Myers employs two other full-time R.Ph.s, one part-time R.Ph., a respiratory therapist, three R.N.s, and two DME specialists. His pharmacy will celebrate its 20th anniversary in November.

Jim Myers Drug Inc. has been providing free blood pressure monitoring and blood glucose screening since its inception. Myers estimated that the pharmacy has discovered between 500 and 600 diabetics over the years. The pharmacy also tests cholesterol levels. Myers conducts tests for peripheral arterial disease about three times a year. About one-quarter of the people who have taken the test have discovered a "serious or latently serious problem," he said. His pharmacy

also does pulmonary screenings for children and for local coal miners, who frequently develop black lung disease.

"We've created a lot of new customers by using the screenings," said Myers.

Myers Drug has a patient-counseling center and a patient-education center, which contains about 60 videotapes that patients can view on the VCR in the store. In addition to providing pamphlets on various health topics, Myers conducts seminars on a regular basis. He hosts two diabetes seminars each year, during which doctors, dietitians, and counselors speak about the disease for 100 to 120 attendees. The pharmacy has also sponsored a sleep disorder seminar for 150 people. In addition, Myers is planning seminars on Alzheimer's and Parkinson's diseases. He and his staff regularly attend health fairs in the community and conduct blood pressure, glucose, and cholesterol screenings. They also give lunchtime presentations at retirement centers in the area.

Jim Myers Drug Inc. delivers between 300 and 350 packages each day, using



**Jim Myers, R.Ph., counsels a patient at his pharmacy in Tuscaloosa, Ala.**



its fleet of 11 cars. Senior citizens often drive the rural routes, the longest of which is about 130 miles. College students who deliver locally sometimes perform small tasks for the senior citizens on their routes, changing lightbulbs or picking up their mail. Myers receives many compliments from his customers on his courteous delivery team. Some of these delivery people have decided to pursue pharmacy as a career and have been very successful. Myers himself first became interested in pharmacy while working as a drugstore stock boy at the age of 13.

Myers has tried to be the first to make innovations in Tuscaloosa. He has com-

pendent pharmacies is now, because we're the people who can do things the way we want. We don't have to worry about what comes down from corporate headquarters," he told *Drug Topics*.

Over the years, Wester has distinguished his pharmacy from others by extending a variety of health-care services to his patients. Since he opened his pharmacy in 1976, he has been providing free blood pressure monitoring weekly. The data that are recorded are kept on site for five years.

Wester elected not to install automatic blood pressure monitors when they became available because he wanted to maintain contact with patients and counsel them about their readings. Wester recently sent a patient to the hospital immediately after he took her blood pressure and discovered it was so high that she was in danger of having stroke.

In addition to blood pressure monitoring, Clarks Drug Store offers blood glucose screenings. These are often done in conjunction with manufacturers or local diabetes educators.

Wester believes in being "a good corporate citizen." Clarks Drug Store participates in community and industry health fairs regularly, providing free screenings as well as counseling. He also organizes health lectures for civic groups and contributes to local charities and school fund raisers.

In 1991, Clarks won the Governor's Award for Excellence in Education for its Super Student Program. The pharmacy spends about \$10,000 annually, awarding students gift certificates for good grades. The children often purchase Christmas gifts for their parents or toys for themselves with their hard-earned certificates. "Our business has grown by leaps and bounds because of our commitment to our community and to our customers. You get out what you put in," said Wester, who was named Small Businessman of the Year in 1994.

Wester has been so successful that he opened a second pharmacy in Williamston 11 years ago. In May, he opened a long-term care pharmacy which provides drugs, convalescent supplies, and consultant-pharmacist services to local nursing homes. The store currently serves 1,100 beds in the community.

Clarks has a 24-hour emergency service. Calls are returned within an hour, no matter what time of day it is. Wester estimated that the pharmacy gets about four or five calls each week. Patients often call for emergency information—for example, when a child has ingested something the parents fear is poisonous. The six R.Ph.s employed by the various Clarks stores take turns on beeper duty.

There is also a respiratory therapist on staff who helps patients choose and set up durable medical equipment in their homes. She instructs them on how to properly use this equipment as well as inhalers and so on.

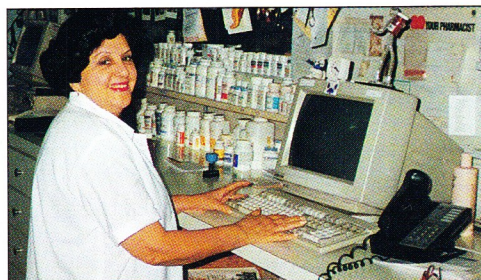
"I think business is so simple. You take care of your customers and they do business with you. It's just very simple," said Wester. "There have been books written [on this subject]. My book would be one line. It's the old Golden Rule: You treat people as you want to be treated."



The staff at Jorge's Pharmacy in Miami, Fla., knows that friendly service keeps customers coming back. Jorge Monteagudo has owned Jorge's Pharmacy for 22 years. Monteagudo began his career in pharmacy when he was just 17 years old. He came to America by himself from Cuba (his parents and brother joined him five years later) and found a job in a Miami Beach pharmacy working as a clerk. There, he learned the business and eventually purchased his own pharmacy. He built a strong and successful drugstore with the help of Ada Bonau, R.Ph., who's been the resident pharmacist for 20 years.

Jorge's Pharmacy caters to the community's large elderly population. The pharmacy delivers Rx's to the aged clientele, often bringing other items requested by the customers, such as milk.

Monteagudo has also tried to make



**Ada Bonau, R.Ph., inputs patient data at Jorge's Pharmacy, Miami, Fla.**



**A drive-thru window is one of many innovations made by Jim Myers Drug.**

Myers compiled a list of about 22 "firsts" the business has achieved, such as being the first pharmacy in Tuscaloosa with a fax machine and the first with 24-hour service. His pharmacy even has a drive-thru window.

"If you don't consider yourself their competition, they've got you. They'll kill you. You've got to outdo them, out-deliver them," said Myers.

Myers and his pharmacy have been given an impressive assortment of awards and recognition. In 1992, the pharmacy was named the State of Alabama Small Business of the Year. As a result, Myers was a participant in the Conference on Small Businesses with President George Bush and Secretary of Commerce Barbara Franklin. In 1994, the pharmacy was given the Innovative Pharmacy Practice Award by DuPont Pharmaceuticals. In 1995, Jim Myers Drug Inc. was named FoxMeyer Health Mart of the Year for the Southeastern Region.



Barry Wester, R.Ph., owner of Clarks Drug Store in Williamston, N.C., believes he has a definite advantage over chain drugstores. "I think that the time for inde-



things more convenient for the customers who visit his store. They can pay their electric, water, and telephone bills at the store, which helps to make his pharmacy a one-stop shopping place. He used to provide these services free of charge but now earns a commission from the companies for collecting the payments. He estimated that 500 people visit the store each day to pay some sort of bill. The pharmacy also issues money orders and notarizes documents.

Monteagudo has always tried to keep his pharmacy on the cutting edge. He claims that his was the first pharmacy in Miami to install a computer system to better serve customers, even before any of the chain drugstores in town.

Stressing the importance of speed and courtesy in dealing with customers, Monteagudo said he tries to process prescriptions as quickly as possible, not making customers wait longer than necessary. "We try to accommodate people. If they need it right away, we do it right away. We don't make them wait. Sometimes they have taxis waiting for them and need the prescriptions quickly," he explained.

Monteagudo goes to great lengths to ensure that his staff is friendly and respectful to customers. "Even if customers just want to change a dollar, we say thanks. I have a note on the counter [reminding employees] to always welcome the customers and to

say 'thank you.' I hate it when I go someplace and they don't say 'thank you,' so I make sure my employees say 'thank you' all the time," said Monteagudo.

Aware of the increasing opportunities in pharmacy, Monteagudo expanded his business interests in 1989 by opening a compounding pharmacy across the street from Jorge's. Nebu-Med employs three R.Ph.s and specializes in home infusion and respiratory services. Nebu-Med supplies local doctors, nurses, and respiratory therapists with the drugs and equipment they need for their patients. Monteagudo also opened another pharmacy in Puerto Rico in November 1992.

## CATEGORY 1

### EXCEPTIONAL PHARMACY AND NONPHARMACY SERVICES

**Arnold Drug Co.**  
918 First St.  
Sutherland, Neb.

**Bauder Pharmacy**  
3802 Ingersoll Ave.  
Des Moines, Iowa

**C&C Discount Drug**  
401 Wollard Blvd.  
Richmond, Mo.

**Central Pharmacy Inc.**  
925 Parkway Ave.  
Conway, Ark.

**Cheney Owl Pharmacy Inc.**  
120 F St.  
Cheney, Wash.

**Clark's Pharmacy**  
136 Lake St.  
Newburgh, N.Y.

**Clarks Drug Store**  
142 W. Main St.  
Williamston, N.C.

**Corner Drugstore**  
1500 E. Main St.  
Bethany, Mo.

**Cox Colonial Pharmacy**  
3700 Lexington Rd.  
Louisville, Ky.

**Dahl Pharmacy**  
1200 Nicollet Mall  
Minneapolis, Minn.

**Downtown Drug Store**  
547 W. Elk Ave.  
Elizabethton, Tenn.

**El Centro Drug Co.**  
495 W. Main St.  
El Centro, Calif.

**F&G Drug Store**  
108 S. Merrill Ave.  
Glendive, Mont.

**Fairfax Drug**  
249 N. Main St.  
Fairfax, Okla.

**Fedders Pharmacy**  
52 Main Ave., N.  
Britt, Iowa

**Florence Pharmacy**  
123 S. Dargan St.  
Florence, S.C.

**Ford Rx Pharmacies**  
2725 N. Meade St.  
Appleton, Wis.

**Gibbs Drug Store**  
216 Clay St.  
Nocona, Texas

**Goudeau's Pharmacy**  
57930 LaBauve Ave.  
Plaquemine, La.

**Hammer Pharmacy**  
600 E. Grand Ave.  
Des Moines, Iowa

**Harry's Pharmacy**  
101 E. Findlay St.  
Carey, Ohio

**Hicks Pharmacy**  
113 N. Ninth St.  
Adel, Iowa

**Hughes Pharmacy**  
120 W. Park Ave.  
Iowa Park, Texas

**Jim Myers Drugs**  
3604 University Blvd. East  
Tuscaloosa, Ala.

**Jorge's Pharmacy**  
1701 Coral Way  
Miami, Fla.

**Keasling's Drug Store**  
1414 Main St.  
Keokuk, Iowa

**McShane Drug Co.**  
1319 S. Landrum St.  
Mount Vernon, Mo.

**Medicine Chest Pharmacy**  
201 S. Bickford Ave.  
El Reno, Okla.

**Moore's Rexall Drugs**  
610 W. Markland Ave.  
Kokomo, Ind.

**Nicholas Pharmacy Inc.**  
421 Main St.  
Summersville, W.Va.

**Olson's Drug Inc.**  
5 Fourth Ave., S.E.  
Conrad, Mont.

**Osborn Pharmacy**  
3050 S. National Ave.  
Springfield, Mo.

**Peoples Pharmacy**  
4018 N. Lamar Blvd.  
Austin, Texas

**Plaza Discount Pharmacy**  
146 W. Highway 78  
Villa Rica, Ga.

**Propst Drugs**  
717 Pratt Ave., N.E.  
Huntsville, Ala.

**Randall Pharmacy**  
103 S. Second Ave.  
Marshalltown, Iowa

**Reynold's Drugs**  
320 Oxmoor Rd.  
Birmingham, Ala.

**Ron's Pharmacy**  
420 W. Pearl St.  
Granberry, Texas

**Rose Drugs**  
4810 N. Nebraska Ave.  
Tampa, Fla.

**Sadler-Hughes Pharmacy**  
216 S. Broad St.  
Clinton, S.C.

**Sanger Drug Store**  
303 Bolivar St.  
Sanger, Texas

**Sav-Mor Drug**  
270 N. Second East  
Mountain Home, Idaho

**Scully Drug Co.**  
1770 Fulton St.  
San Francisco, Calif.

**South Windsor Pharmacy**  
969 Sullivan Ave.  
South Windsor, Conn.

**Southold Pharmacy Inc.**  
Main Rd.  
Southold, N.Y.

**Trummels Drug Store**  
Highway 169, P.O. Box 459  
Oologah, Okla.

**United Drug Center, Inc.**  
4001 N. MacArthur Blvd.  
Oklahoma City, Okla.

**Vander Linden Drug**  
826 Main St.  
Pella, Iowa

**Wanek Pharmacy**  
802 W. Second St.  
Grand Island, Neb.

**Wilkinson Drug Store**  
105 S. Oak St.  
Nevada, Mo.



CATEGORY 2

EXCEPTIONAL MERCHANDISING/ADVERTISING/PROMOTION

Presentation is everything

Owners of independent pharmacies must be creative marketers in order to compete with other stores. Some choose to fill a void in the community by becoming the source for a niche market; others initiate innovative promotional programs. In such ways, these Independent Superstars have distinguished themselves from the competition. People within their communities know that they can find the items they need at these outstanding pharmacies.

Halpin's Pharmacy in Spokane, Wash., has fostered a unique image. The store boasts more than 16,000 sq. ft. of quality art and collectible items. People from miles around come to purchase Hummel, Lladro, and Precious Moments collectibles, as well as Howard Miller grandfather clocks and Thomas Kincaide paintings. This pharmacy looks more like a museum than a drugstore. It was recently renovated and now features an art gallery, with lighted encasements to display the art, as well as a "Treasure Room" for collectibles, and a year-round Christmas shop.

"It's nice to walk through and look at these collectible items. A lot of people come in just to browse. You want them to do that. Hopefully, when the time comes for them [to purchase items], they'll remember you and come back in," said Ron Gill, R.Ph., one of the store's three owners.

Halpin's has always carried a variety of gift items, but it has expanded its selection of collectibles during the past few years. It also features fine and costume jewelry as well as cosmetics and fragrances. These departments are run by JoAnn Dietel, a cosmetologist and co-owner of the store. Customers can also "wrap up" a shopping day with a trip to the store's large Hallmark department.

"To compete out there, you have to do something different. We had to find something unique since we have to compete with the super stores," said Gill.



Left, Ron Gill, R.Ph., stands beneath the new skylight in Halpin's Pharmacy, while a customer appreciates a painting featured in the pharmacy's art gallery. Halpin's also features a year-round Christmas shop and a large selection of grandfather clocks.



Rick Eriksen, manager and co-owner, makes sure the store is well merchandised. During the recent renovation, the aisles were widened and a tile walkway was installed under a skylight that cuts through the center of the store. The store's owners believe that the wider aisles have allowed them to do better merchandising of their OTC products. They set up seasonal displays and advertise sales in Valu-Rite circulars and Promotions Unlimited coupon books.

Halpin's Pharmacy employs three pharmacists and between 20 and 25 other employees at any given time. Gill said that his pharmacy provides a lot of services not offered by the chains in the area, such as free delivery and charge accounts. Halpin's Pharmacy is also a

provider for nearby home care and long-term care facilities.



Donna Lee, R.Ph. and owner of Anderson Drug Store in High Point, N.C., has found a niche market and built a whole section of her pharmacy around it. Lee has devoted about 25% of her pharmacy to the sale of vitamins, herbs, and homeopathic remedies.

"The development of this section over the past few years has really been patient driven. Their desire for education and information and for specific products convinced me that I had to get into this area," she said.

Lee has always been interested in nutrition, having worked in a hospital, figuring out the nutritional needs of



patients and working with enteral diets. She had also often counseled pharmacy customers about the importance of nutrition and diet when they questioned her about health problems they were experiencing.

Her curiosity about homeopathy was first piqued by a pharmacy student who worked in her store three years ago. The student had completed an internship in Wales, where such treatment is popular. The student shared with Lee what she had learned in the United Kingdom and set up an end-cap devoted to this treatment category with a small assortment of products and pamphlets. Lee continued to learn more about alternative medicine, taking classes and reading many books on the subject.

Though her interest in nutrition, herbals, and homeopathy remained strong, she did not really tap into the market until September 1994. A large health food chain approached Lee and asked her to convert that section of her store into a franchise for its vitamins and other products. The deal became too complicated, so Lee decided to set up a full section on her own. She researched many companies and found one whose products she liked and trusted. She invested \$3,000 initially to set up the section, which has more than doubled since then.

The new section includes an extensive collection of vitamins, herbs, and homeopathic remedies. Lee also sells books and magazines on alternative care and related subjects. Her customers interested in alternative care are avid readers who really research their options, said Lee, so she leaves many books on the shelves as reference materials for her customers and also distributes pamphlets.

Lee now publishes a monthly newsletter for her customers. She currently mails the letter to 50 people, including fellow R.Ph.s and physicians, and leaves many more copies on the counter for curious customers. Lee writes about new studies and developments in the herbal and homeopathic treatment areas. Each month, one herbal product is featured.

"I tell them what's come out in pharmacy literature. Most of the journals now have something every month either substantiating [the effectiveness of alternative



**Donna Lee, R.Ph.,  
of Anderson Drug  
Store.**

medicine] or looking at whether or not we really ought to be in this field," said Lee.

She said people seem interested mostly in herbal remedies. Many are familiar with herbal remedies their grandmothers used but don't really understand homeopathy.

"I spend a lot of time not selling products but just talking to people about herbs. I get a lot of calls from people asking about the differences between homeopathy and conventional medicine and homeopathy and herbs. I think they like having a pharmacist to talk to rather than just a health food store clerk," said Lee.

She said that the response to this new section has been positive. Advertising in newspapers, on billboards, and in the Yellow Pages has helped Lee establish her pharmacy as the local source for such items. Physicians and other R.Ph.s in the area often call Lee to get more information about alternative medicine and send their patients to her to purchase the unconventional remedies they're seeking.

Lee likes educating her patients about their treatment options and remains dedicated to recommending the best treatments available. "I probably talk myself out of a lot of sales because I'm honest. Because of that, they come back whenever they need to know or to buy something. That's the way it's always been throughout the whole drugstore. We want them to come back because we've helped them, not just make to one big sale and never see them again," said Lee.



Teasley Drug, established by Ron Teasley, R.Ph., in Gravette, Ark., 12 years



**Ron Teasley, R.Ph., and Pam Russow, clerk, chat with a customer outside Teasley Drug in Gravette, Ark.**

ago, lies just 17 miles west of Wal-Mart's headquarters. Though there are no Wal-Mart stores within Gravette's small community of 1,500 people, there are four Wal-Marts in the vicinity, as well as 25 chain drugstores. Despite that, Teasley Drug has remained strong and successful.

Teasley said that he has tripled sales over the past 10 years by employing effective advertising and merchandising techniques. Though it is a small store, it carries an extensive selection of goods. The variety is so exceptional that the pharmacy has even been dubbed "Ron's Wal-Mart West" by local patrons.

"Our philosophy is 'If we don't have it, they don't need it,'" said Teasley.

The store carries cosmetics, fine fragrances, greeting cards, wedding albums and invitations, books, and other stationery items. The pharmacy also promotes a private line of Family Pharmacy products. Teasley advertises in the local newspaper and on two radio stations, in addition to sending circulars to 5,000 addresses.

"The key to any kind of advertising program is consistency. So many pharmacists or drugstore owners expect that the first time they do an advertising campaign it will be successful. Whether it be mailers or newspaper, radio or TV ads, people don't start noticing until the third or fourth time you do it," said Teasley.

He also stressed the importance of keeping the inventory well stocked. "You can send out 5,000 mailers, but if you don't have the merchandise to cover it, the customers will never come back. You have to have the merchandise to back up what you say you're going to do, as well," said Teasley.

Not only can customers stop in Teasley Drug and pick up basic items, they can order products that the store doesn't normally stock. The pharmacy acts as a distributor for Basic Products, a catalogue sales company based in Pittsburgh. Teasley buys about 500 catalogues each year and gives them to his customers at no cost. His patrons then order items from the catalogue through



the pharmacy and pick them up there when they arrive.

Teasley believes in developing and maintaining close ties with his community. In addition to being the announcer for local high school and junior high football games, he's active in many civic organizations, church activities, and the local school board. His pharmacy fosters a community spirit and serves as an informal meeting place for many residents. When Teasley purchased the

store, he decided to keep the booths that were still in place even after the old-fashioned soda fountain had been ripped out by the previous owner. Teasley Drug now offers free coffee in that section of the store. He estimated that they brew between 15 and 20 pots of coffee each day. Many townspeople wander in during the day to sit and talk to their neighbors while they enjoy a cup of coffee.

Teasley obviously understands the importance of effective marketing and

merchandising. He thinks that knowledge sets him apart from some pharmacists who don't get involved in setting up a successful front-end business. "There's a difference between a pharmacist and a druggist. A pharmacist likes to count pills and talk to people about side effects. A druggist is a jack-of-all-trades. I'm a druggist. I like messing with the front-end, and I like doing a whole lot of different things in addition to filling prescriptions and counseling patients," said Teasley.

## CATEGORY 2

### EXCEPTIONAL MERCHANDISING/ ADVERTISING/PROMOTIONS

#### Adams Pharmacy

922 Ohio Ave.  
Lynn Haven, Fla.

#### Anderson Drug Store

2401 English Rd.  
High Point, N.C.

#### Aspen Drug Co.

432 E. Hyman Ave.  
Aspen, Colo.

#### Bay Health Mart Pharmacy

1300 Egg Harbor Rd.  
Sturgeon Bay, Wis.

#### Buffalo Drugs

1 N. Whittaker St.  
New Buffalo, Mich.

#### Burgland Drug Store

1440 N. Henderson St.  
Galesburg, Ill.

#### Butterfield Drug Store

5009 Sunshine Parkway  
Feede Rd., Fort Pierce, Fla.

#### Buy-Wise Drugs

1042 Winchester Rd., N.E.  
Huntsville, Ala.

#### Buy-Wise Drugs

2302 Whitesburg Dr., S.  
Huntsville, Ala.

#### Buy-Wise Drugs

4710 University Dr., N.W.  
Huntsville, Ala.

#### Carls Pharmacy

9463 W. Sample Rd.  
Coral Springs, Fla.

#### Cook's Pharmacy

42 S. Penn Ave.  
Eminence, Ky.

#### Craigs Pharmacy

6233 Crestwood Station  
Crestwood, Ky.

#### Dahl Pharmacy Inc.

1200 Nicollet Mall  
Minneapolis, Minn.

#### Dons Drug

101 N. Grand Ave.  
Crescent, Okla.

#### Halpin's Pharmacy

11406 E. Sprague Ave.  
Spokane, Wash.

#### Hilliard Drug Store

1001 N.W. Second St.  
Kerens, Texas

#### J&D Pharmacy Inc.

Osage Shopping Center  
P.O. Box 1599 Warsaw, Mo.

#### Ken's Pharmacy

200 S. Highland Ave.  
Cushing, Okla.

#### Larry's Pharmacy

301 West Muskogee St.  
Sulphur, Okla.

#### Lee's Pharmacy

940 Parkway Ave.  
Trenton, N.J.

#### Leonard Pharmacy

122 Collin St.  
Leonard, Texas

#### Mac's Medicine Mart

1425 E. Center St.  
Kingsport, Tenn.

#### Mataya Drug

137 W. Second St.  
Madrid, Iowa

#### Medical Pharmacy

6400 Main St.  
Zachary, La.

#### Mitchell Drug

125 E. Glendale St.  
Dillon, Mont.

#### New Hope Drug Co.

P.O. Box 451  
New Hope, Ala.

#### Northside Pharmacy

6105 N. Kings Highway  
Myrtle Beach, S.C.

#### Osceola Drug Co.

109 S. Main St.  
Osceola, Iowa

#### Park Blvd. Pharmacy

3757 Park Blvd.  
San Diego, Calif.

#### Parkview Self-Serv Drug

408 15th St.  
Tuscaloosa, Ala.

#### Pawnee Hillcrest Pharmacy

539 Sixth St.  
Pawnee, Okla.

#### Payne Family Pharmacy

200 S. Main St.  
Floydada, Texas

#### Perkins Pharmacy

4005 20th St.  
Vero Beach, Fla.

#### Perryman Drug Inc.

704 Park St.  
Calico Rock, Ark.

#### Pielemeier Rexall Drugs

19 S. Washington St.  
Bloomfield, Ind.

#### Powell Drug Co.

140 N. Bent St.  
Powell, Wyo.

#### Priceless Drug

2210 Sunrise Blvd.  
Rancho Cordova, Calif.

#### Purcell Drug Co.

707 S. Broadway St.  
Oak Grove, Mo.

#### Rezac Drug

317 E. Douglas St.  
O'Neill, Neb.

#### R&S Healthmart Drug

821 W. Main St.  
Duncan, Okla.

#### Rye Beach Pharmacy

464 Forest Ave.  
Rye, N.Y.

#### Sam's Drug Store

300 N. Church  
Fayette, Mo.

#### Sav-Mor Drug

139 Main Ave., West  
Twins Falls, Idaho

#### Shop & Save Drugs

255 N. Everett St.  
Bryson City, N.C.

#### Smith-McKenney Co.

16 Village Plaza  
Shelbyville, Ky.

#### Sun Drug

5800 Merle Hay Rd.  
Johnston, Iowa

#### Teasley Drug

115 East Main  
Gravette, Ark.

#### Tooley Drug Co.

2615 13th St.  
Columbus, Neb.

#### Wander Linden Drug

826 Main St.  
Pella, Iowa

#### Ward Eastside Pharmacy

2501 E. Walnut St.  
Des Moines, Iowa

#### Watson's City Drug

192 S. Seventh St.  
Raymondville, Texas

#### Watson Drug Store

214 W. Main St.  
Greenville, Ill.

#### Western Drug Store

836 Tenth Ave.  
Sidney, Neb.

#### Windsor Pharmacy

P.O. Box 288  
Highway 460  
Windsor, Va.

#### Winn Drugs

72 Indian Head Rd.  
Kings Park, N.Y.

#### Wycoff Drug Co.

101 W. Main St.  
Weatherford, Okla.



CATEGORY 3

OVERCOMING COMPETITION

# Only the strong survive

**W**hen Albert Shlamowitz, R.Ph., worked for a drug-store chain, his supervisor criticized that his pharmacy was overstaffed. Shlamowitz has proved that being overstaffed gives him an edge over the competition.

Having three people besides himself on pharmacy duty at Budget Drug enabled him to quadruple volume since he bought the business nine years ago. Annual gross was under \$400,000 then; it's projected at \$1.6 million this fiscal year, as the Feasterville-Trevoze, Pa., store nears its 20th anniversary.

Surrounded by competition, Budget's per-square-foot volume of \$160 to \$170 is "probably higher than the chains'. Being overstaffed works for me—and it certainly works for my customers, who appreciate short waits for prescriptions and long sessions of pharmaceutical counseling."

Prescription-filling at Budget Drug is fast. "It's my 7-Eleven mentality," Shlamowitz jokes. "I know people want their prescriptions as fast as they can get them. Nobody waits more than 10 minutes. People can park in front, dash in and pick up their medications, and be on their way.

"For people who want to use every second of waiting time, there is a card section to browse through, which I recently expanded because card profits are better than almost any other merchandise."

Being swift to fill an Rx doesn't mean that there isn't adequate checking. "Having a full staff means that I am freed up to check every prescription before it leaves the store and to converse with customers."

Because he personally checks every pre-

scription, Shlamowitz remembered filling an Rx for a heart medication the day before he received fax notification of the drug's recall, so he was able to phone the patient's doctor immediately. "The husband came in shortly after that to thank me for saving his wife's life—she had already begun to have a severe reaction to the medicine. I would have caught the name on a computer list very shortly, but sometimes every minute counts."

Shlamowitz is not hesitant about questioning Rx's. For example, patients who come in to buy Ted stockings at their doctor's orders may not be aware—and neither is the doctor—that this type of support is only for nonambulatory patients. Shlamowitz calls the doctor and suggests support hose with a higher compression.

Budget Drug has just installed a patient-counseling center, where Shlamowitz can confer with patients who seek privacy. This should avert incidents such as one he had with a patient who, intent on privacy, put his arm around Shlamowitz's shoulder and, as their heads touched, whispered that he needed something to get rid of head lice.



Competition seems to be beneficial to the economic health of James Drug Store, Denham Springs, La. Despite the arrival of two new chain competitors

this year, James increased annual volume by 20%, to \$3.9 million, and celebrated a record August: \$350,000 in sales, up \$22,000 over August 1994.

Herman Crotwell, owner, explained his success in terms of "personalized service," which extends beyond the doors of his drug-

store. "This is a small community, 15,000 population, so our concern and involvement is with everybody who lives here.

"That's why we have adopted a school, cosponsoring it with a local bank. We help with special events, such as honors day, when we are invited to participate in the program and present the special T-shirts we furnish. We contribute to the band and the athletic program. When it's 'Drug-Free Program' week, we furnish ribbons and other materials."

Crotwell serves on the board of directors for the Greater Baton Rouge Cancer Society. And he is invited to speak before senior citizen groups and participate in health fairs at nursing homes.

Patient counseling is a priority function. Crotwell has set aside a private area to talk with patients.

"Most patients worry about side effects. And the explanatory printouts or brochures often don't balance the probabilities. I think it's important to go over the possible side effects and evaluate them. I'll say, 'This is very rare,' so that patients don't worry so much that they don't take the medicine, or, 'This is quite common; don't worry about it.' And I remind patients to call the doctor if a side effect is causing problems."

If the patient wants to consult a pharmacist or obtain an emergency prescription, there is 24-hour service; when the customer phones, the ring goes to a beeper, and help is immediately forthcoming.

Personalized service extends to the "old-fashioned grill where we serve breakfast and cook hamburgers for lunch," Crotwell said. "There are 19 stools. It's a meeting place for business people in the morning, and we do a brisk luncheon business."

James is also a collection center for South Central phone bills.



Within a one-mile radius of Northport Rexall Pharmacy, Northport, Ala., there are 11 chain drugstores. This could



**Al Shlamowitz, R.Ph., counsels a customer in Budget Drug.**



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sound like a formula for bankruptcy for a lone independent, but Rob Colburn has racked up a substantial increase every year since he bought the pharmacy. The store was grossing about \$650,000. The number right now is \$1.2 million—and counting.

"I worry more about what I'm doing than what the competition is doing," Colburn emphasized. What he's doing must be right, because in early January he had to hire another R.Ph. And he hasn't shredded his help-wanted ad as more new customers are coming in all the time.

Colburn not only is committed to actually providing personal service but gives it a special twist with suggestions like this:

- Call every customer by his or her first name.
- Be available around the clock.
- Offer in-store charge accounts. Opened carefully and monitored properly, they are business-builders and customer-pleasers.
- Pick up and deliver prescriptions.
- Personalize departments. For example, Northport's gift department is called "The Gift Gallery." A simple thing like giving a department a name makes the store seem more specialized, more customer-oriented.



**Rob Colburn, R.Ph., counsels a customer about his infant's medicine.**

- Employ a full-time nurse for additional counseling service. "We couldn't afford to do this if we didn't have a Vital Care franchise for home infusion, and that's the area the nurse concentrates on, but she is also

available for other health questions, including suggestions for compliance: What devices can help remind a patient to take medication on the prescribed schedule. When we get a home infusion customer, we often get a drugstore customer, and the other way around."

### CATEGORY 3 OVERCOMING COMPETITION

#### **A&A Temple Drugs Inc.**

623 N. Federal Blvd.  
Riverton, Wyo.

#### **Altoona Pharmacy**

307 Eighth St., S.W.  
Altoona, Iowa

#### **Argenta Drug Co.**

324 Main St.  
North Little Rock, Ark.

#### **Barnes Drug Store**

210 Main St.  
Sterling, Colo.

#### **Berea Drug**

U.S. 25 North  
P.O. Box 316, Berea, Ky.

#### **Blankenship Pharmacy**

222 East Watauga Ave.  
Johnson City, Tenn.

#### **Budget Drug Store**

1137 Bustleton Pike  
Feasterville-Trevose, Pa.

#### **Cedar Springs Pharmacy**

Route 3, Box 124A  
Tuttle, Okla.

#### **Central Pharmacy**

301 N. Hudson St.  
Actus, Okla.

#### **Cheney Owl Pharmacy Inc.**

120 F St.  
Chevey, Wash.

#### **Colburn's Northport Pharmacy**

909 McFarland Blvd.  
Northport, Ala.

#### **Collier's Rexall Drug Store**

100 W. Dickson St.  
Fayetteville, Ark.

#### **David's Discount Pharmacy and Gift Shop Inc.**

Bryon Rd.  
Sumiton, Ala.

#### **Dowagiac Drugs Inc.**

223 S. Front St.  
Dowagiac, Mich.

#### **Elliott's Pharmacy**

5735 El Camino Real  
Atascadero, Calif.

#### **Evergreen Pharmacy**

5601 Geary Blvd.  
San Francisco, Calif.

#### **Family Drug Mart**

7227 N. U.S. Highway 1  
Cocoa, Fla.

#### **Family Pharmacy Inc.**

3644 Webber St.  
Sarasota, Fla.

#### **Ford's Drug Inc.**

435 E. Main St.  
Spartanburg, S.C.

#### **Gifts Scripts & More Pharmacy**

7025 Howdershell Rd.  
Hazelwood, Mo.

#### **Grove Pharmacy**

1001 E. Primrose St.  
Springfield, Mo.

#### **H&G Discount**

3812 E. Tuxedo Blvd.  
Bartlesville, Okla.

#### **Hobbs Pharmacy**

119 N. Banana River Dr.  
Merritt Island, Fla.

#### **Hometown Pharmacy**

407 E. McPherson Ave.  
Nashville, Ga.

#### **James Drug Store Inc.**

205 Florida Ave., S.E.  
Denham Springs, La.

#### **J.J. Smith & Son**

2950 Hempstead Turnpike  
Levittown, N.Y.

#### **Kantor Pharmacy Inc.**

510 Fulton Ave.  
Hempstead, N.Y.

#### **Kendall's Healthmart Drug**

222 E. Rogers Blvd.  
Skiatook, Okla.

#### **Liggett Rexall Drug**

1610 S. Fiske Blvd.  
Rockledge, Fla.

#### **Low Cost Rx Inc.**

3940 S. Keystone Ave.  
Indianapolis, Ind.

#### **Medical Plaza Pharmacy**

Alcorn Dr.  
Corinth, Miss.

#### **Miller Pharmacy Inc.**

1900 E. Military Ave.  
Fremont, Neb.

#### **Miller Pharmacy Inc.**

322 E. 22nd St.  
Fremont, Neb.

#### **Mizelle's Discount Drug**

925 E. Memorial Dr.  
Ahoskie, N.C.

#### **Newcombe Pharmacy**

125 W. Park St.  
Pharr, Texas

#### **North Florida Pharmacy**

515 S. First St.  
Lake City, Fla.

#### **North Oak Pharmacy**

4260 North Oak St.  
Kansas City, Mo.

#### **Northport Rexall Pharmacy**

909 McFarland Blvd.  
Northport, Ala.

#### **Peter's Pharmacy**

495 Amherst St.  
Nashua, N.H.

#### **Porter Health Mart**

1522 Main St.  
Petersburg, Texas

#### **Professional Mall Pharmacy**

7800 N. Kings Highway  
Myrtle Beach, S.C.

#### **Ross Drug**

202 S. Main St.  
Broken Arrow, Okla.

#### **Saint Michael Drugs**

307 E. Central Ave.  
Saint Michael, Minn.

#### **Save Mor Pharmacy**

171 S. Riverside Ave.  
Croton-on-Hudson, N.Y.

#### **Scott Pharmacy**

114 N. Washington St.  
Kaufman, Texas

#### **Sun Drugs**

700 N. Zaragoza Rd.  
El Paso, Texas

#### **Sun Park Fair Pharmacy**

100 E. Euclid  
Des Moines, Iowa

#### **Vander Linden Drug**

826 Main St.  
Pella, Iowa

#### **Walls Medicine Center**

708 S. Washington St.  
Grand Forks, N.D.

#### **Wells Turner Family Pharmacy**

1704 Cherokee Ave., S.W.  
Cullman, Ala.

#### **Winn Pharmacy**

203 E. Baker St.  
Brownwood, Texas



CATEGORY 4  
HANDLING A CRISIS

## The calm before, during, and after the storm

**W**hat's your worst nightmare? Falling off a cliff? Walking down the street naked? Back in school, facing a test for a course you've never taken? If you are a business owner in the electronic age, your worst nightmare could be your computer system crashing.

Lester's Professional Pharmacy, Axle, Texas, lived through it, with the help of human beings, whose skills and dedication to the company picked up where the hard drive left off.

Tom Standefer, R.Ph.-owner, doesn't have to mark June 16 on his 1995 calendar. The day is indelibly etched in his memory. It was the day he realized that all data in his computer since March 27 were *unrecorded* history.

He had updated his computer system in March, relying on the automatic backup feature in case of any equipment failure. "I slid into realization gradually, first noticing some computer errors, then hearing peculiar noises from the hard drive. The seriousness of the situation finally became clear as the computer crashed late that Thursday afternoon."

Thus began about 500 hours of work after the store closed and before it opened every day for about three weeks, as Standefer and his wife, Cyndi, also an R.Ph., and their staff began recreating records, using daily printouts and written Rx's. "I was here until 4:30 A.M. Friday," Standefer recalled. "And, until midnight or 1:00 A.M. for the next 10 days.

"It took two weeks to restore our files and another week to restore our accounts receivable. Then we had to cross-reference the newly entered prescription numbers with the original prescription numbers and double-check the entry data."

Fortunately, it was mid-summer, which is not as heavy a period for prescriptions, but still "we had to call in all refills, which took a lot of time. We faxed a memo to all the doctors' offices to explain what had happened and why we were calling in refills that had been previously approved."

Standefer is quick to pay tribute to expert help from his wife and from Mary Ann Smith, "the certified pharmacy tech who did the majority of the work," and to other employees, including Carrie Johnson and Jimra Mooney.

For the dedicated pharmacy, a computer virus can't interfere with the treatment of human viruses and other maladies.



Dani Lynch, R.Ph., was just leaving home to visit one of the two Thrifty Pharmacies she manages when she heard what sounded like "a sonic boom."

It was the Oklahoma City bomb explosion that killed 171 people on April 19. Five months later, Lynch could hardly keep her voice steady as she described the devastation and suffering.

Though both Thrifty pharmacies are situated about 15 miles from the blast, they were among the early volunteers. "There was a command center set up in a church for 30 days," Lynch explained. "It was not only an information source [people came there to hear any news about family members trapped in the bombed building] but also a medical center."

Thrifty contributed hundreds, maybe thousands, of dollars worth of medical supplies. "We didn't keep count. No one in the community did. Everybody in the community helped and contributed. They pulled together. It was so organized that it almost seemed planned.

"Police, firefighters, and families of the victims could come to the command center for treatment of

medical and emotional problems or even for just a few minutes of rest. There was a wide range of care. Children had to be treated for illnesses probably brought on by the upheaval in their families—worrying, not eating, not sleeping. There were a lot of ear infections.

"We brought in pain medications, antibiotics, bandages, dressings, and many anti-anxiety preparations. The emotional impact was terrible.

"The center even had canine patients. The dogs used to search for victims in the wreckage and frequently suffered cuts on their feet that needed care. And they became tired, just as the human volunteers did, and needed a place to rest."

Every doctor in the city volunteered. "There wasn't a doctor in his or her office during that time," Lynch reported. It was through friends, a doctor and a nurse who had volunteered at the center, that Lynch established her role as a provider of medicine and related supplies. At the same time, her supplier, Bergen Brunswig, based in Orange County, Calif., was doing its utmost to keep supplies of medications and other medical items coming as needed.

Lynch made daily deliveries to the center, so eventually she didn't have to show her credentials to the National Guard surrounding the command post. Identification of authorized entrants was a precaution taken for fear that families of the attack victims might also be targeted.

"Groups have even come in to study the event and how the community responded," Lynch reported. "They



**Dani Lynch, R.Ph., and Kristi McColloch, D.V.M., display products used to treat humans and animals after the Oklahoma blast.**



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think it may be helpful to obtain information for reference in other tragic situations."



What do you do if your business goes up in smoke?

The Brown family—Wes, R.Ph.; his wife, Sharon; and their son, Kenton, R.Ph.—advise: "Jump in your car immediately and look for a temporary location, call your suppliers and start ordering restock, and mobilize employees to begin moving to the temporary quarters."

That's not easy advice to follow. When fire destroys your building and its contents, the shock is apt to be paralyzing, but delay in making plans is a luxury you can't afford. Quick planning enabled the Browns to reopen Keasling's Drug Store, Keokuk, Iowa, in just four days—with a holiday weekend in between.

"We opened at 9:00 A.M. on Sunday," Kenton Brown began. "My parents had gone to 8:00 A.M. church services when the fire department got the call at about 8:15. The blaze had been building for some time. We don't know the cause—electrical malfunction is the best guess. The department located me at a quarter to nine. By that time, the building and its contents were pretty well consumed; the department was able to save only the two houses at one side of our building.

"If there's a lesson to be learned, it's technological. We back up the computer, and, every night, my parents take home a tape and I take home another.

"The other lesson is to have adequate

insurance. In our case, it wasn't enough, because it didn't fully cover inventory. But, we had coverage on the building and contents [the loss was about \$750,000], business interruption insurance and reconstruction insurance."

The Browns quickly cruised Main Street, looking for temporary quarters for the business and found a three-storefront site they could rent. They started with one front, which was already carpeted and, two months after the fire, were in the process of renting the other two fronts, which had been carpeted by then. They will be ready for the Christmas season with 6,000 sq. ft., the same space they had at their original store.

Over the holiday weekend, their primary supplier, McKesson, and another supplier, D&K, helped them with computerized order books. They took advantage of a program designed for new store openings that would give them dating.

The community of 14,000 provided support that the Browns could hardly believe. Competitor pharmacies made supplies available so that the Browns could service a hospice and two nursing homes, the most urgently needy of their customers. Other customers remained loyal, "some asking their doctors for samples so they could withstand the four-day delay." A jewelry store owner brought a small refrigerator to chill soft drinks for hard-working, long-working employees.

Employees were very supportive. One



**A demolition crew clears the charred remains of Keasling's Drug Store.**

drove to another pharmacy miles away to get a diskette to replace the one

that failed during rebooting of the computer system. "We really put our employees to the test," Brown observed. "And they came through. We were amazed and very grateful for the support we received. You just don't know how many people will help until you need it."

Rebuilding Keasling's at the store's old site probably won't get started until next spring. Winters in Iowa are daunting when it comes to construction. But the Browns are optimistic that their normal \$1.5 million in annual sales won't be dented too much by four days out of commission and the temporary move. It's possible, they think, that the new store may even exceed that volume.

### CONCLUSION

The 1995 Independent Superstars share a common belief in the successful future of independent pharmacy. They have demonstrated that independent pharmacies can compete by offering friendly and reliable service. They can overcome competition by employing innovative marketing and merchandising techniques. By imbuing their stores with their unique personalities, these Superstars have created warm and caring pharmacies that endure for their communities.

**Karyn Snyder and Irene Clepper**

Irene Clepper writes frequently on pharmacy subjects.

## CATEGORY 4 HANDLING A CRISIS

**Beggs Pharmacy**  
200 S. Adair St.  
Pryor, Okla.

**Blankenship Pharmacy**  
222 E. Watauga Ave.  
Johnson City, Tenn.

**Bokas-Jordan Pharmacy**  
41 Hoffman Dr.  
Gulf Beach, Fla.

**Burton Drug Store**  
319 W. Reed St.  
Moberly, Mo.

**Debbie's Family Pharmacy**  
1100 W. Poplar St.  
Rogers, Ark.

**Grove Pharmacy**  
1522 E. Sunshine St.  
Springfield, Mo.

**Johnson Pharmacy Inc.**  
Highway 25, P.O. Box 164  
Quitman, Ark.

**Keasling's Drug Store**  
1414 Main St.  
Keokuk, Iowa

**Moreno Pharmacy Inc.**  
1550 W. 84th St.  
Hialeah, Fla.

**Lafitte Pharmacy**  
801 E. Main St.  
Tishomingo, Okla.

**Lesters Professional Pharmacy Inc.**  
100 Denver Trail  
Azle, Texas

**The Medicine Cabinet**  
120 N. Robinson Ave.  
Oklahoma City, Okla.

**Scott's Pharmacy**  
2267 S.W. Railroad Ave.  
Hammond, La.

**Thrifty Pharmacy**  
10908 N. May Ave.  
Oklahoma City, Okla.

**Vander Linden Drug**  
826 Main St.  
Pella, Iowa

**Village Pharmacy**  
1017 W. Fort Williams St.  
Sylacauga, Ala.

**Watson Drug Store**  
121 N. Center Ave.  
Piedmont, Ala.

**Wooldridge Drug**  
114 W. Main St.  
Vine Grove, Ky.