

THE Messenger

Daniel Pharmacy: 62 years in business

Longtime family-owned business continues to innovate



-Messenger photo by Kadin Luhmann

Daniel Pharmacy has been open at the corner of Central Avenue and 12th Street since 1963 and has been a family-owned business since it debuted.

John Daniel II had to make a difficult decision as a college student attending the University of Iowa.

Daniel originally wanted to be an engineering major, but switched to pharmacy after a conversation with his father.

After struggling early in his college career, Daniel said he considered going back to engineering, but decided to stick with pharmacy and never looked back.

In 1963, Daniel and his parents opened Daniel Pharmacy at 1114 Central Ave in Fort Dodge. It has remained open ever since. He currently runs the business with his two children, Mary Kay Daniel and John Daniel III.

The family-owned pharmacy provides a variety of products and services in addition to prescriptions, such as on-site compounding, home health care aides, lift chairs, scooters and diabetic supplies like footwear and compression socks.



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John Daniel II has assembled a small museum in the basement of the pharmacy building, filled with items from the long history of his business. Not all of those items are directly related to filling prescriptions. The Kodak box is left from a time when people dropped film off at the pharmacy to be developed.

Additionally, Mary Kay Daniel has a store connected to the pharmacy called Mary Kay's Gifts and Home Decor. The shop offers numerous home decorations, accessory items and cosmetic products.

John Daniel III does a little bit of everything at the pharmacy, filling in for different roles when necessary.

John Daniel III said the most rewarding part of his 20 years at Daniel Pharmacy is being able to help people and make a difference in their lives.

“There’s been several instances where I’ve made interventions that realistically saved a person’s life,” John Daniel III said. “A person could just fill prescriptions at the doctor’s orders, but you can actually talk to the patient and find out that there may be something more serious going on and make suggestions.”

John Daniel III recalled an instance where the pharmacy provided a specific prescription for an individual going through chemotherapy because of its compounding room. The room gives the pharmacy the opportunity to provide medications that are not commercially available and that are catered to a patient’s needs.



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Mary Kay Daniel stands at the counter of her store, Mary Kay's Gifts and Home Decor. The store is adjacent to Daniel Pharmacy.

“We were the niche that was able to make something so she could get some pain relief,” John Daniel III said. “I also explained to her what I’ve heard from other people going through chemo and she was very appreciative. When you get a handwritten thank you card for taking the time to go over everything, that’s rewarding.”

Daniel Pharmacy’s compounding room is a recent addition to the store after it was remodeled a few years ago.

“We expanded the store to keep up with the new rules for our compounding room,” John Daniel II said.

“We’re able to synchronize the medications that’ll come due at the same time and we can view and monitor them regularly,” he added. “The goal is every 30 or 90 days to have someone come in and have all of their medications ready.”

John Daniel II credits the success of Daniel Pharmacy to the longtime and newer employees of the store.

“Linda has been with me for 40 years and is the most loyal, understanding person,” he said. “Mary Kay has been with me for 20 years and Katie has been here for 20 years. Johnny, my son, has been here for about 20 years and is our workhorse and then we have some younger people who work very hard in the pharmacy.”

John Daniel II said that the pharmacy’s adaptation to changing technology is another reason for the store’s longevity.

“We had cash registers, typewriters and counting trays,” John Daniel II said. “Now, we have computers, point of sale and electronic counting.”

He keeps a museum of some of the pharmacy’s old technology and equipment in the basement of the store as a time capsule.

Another significant change to the pharmacy was the distribution of various vaccinations.

“We didn’t give immunizations when we started and this morning we’ve already had three,” John Daniel II said.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the pharmacy was renovated, which expanded the amount of space in the store.

John Daniel II said that the staff used the new space to accommodate the high demand for the COVID-19 vaccines in 2021.

“We had a real team effort during the pandemic,” John Daniel II said. “We had 25 chairs lined up and a computer where people checked in. We could do 100 shots and were really streamlined for it.”

John Daniel II and Mary Kay Daniel recently attended the Retail Business Conference in Denver, Colorado. The event gave the father and daughter the opportunity to view new products and get involved in different programs and courses.

The event left John Daniel II and Mary Kay Daniel inspired to continue to find ways to innovate in their stores.

“It’s quite a feat for me to even be close to up to date with all the new stuff,” John Daniel II said. “I am proud to have a modern pharmacy and have been able to do this for so many years.”

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