

# Downtown favorite Cafe Fromage to close

By Whitney Helm Staff writer | Posted: Saturday, September 5, 2015 10:00 am

A favorite place for coffee dates is closing its doors today.

After three years, downtown business Café Fromage is ending its run. Customers who hadn't seen the news via the cafe's Facebook page walked into the store with shocked faces on Friday morning.

Jennifer Esperanza and Lisa Anderson-Levy said they've been coming to the shop a few times a week since it was the Cheese People and Nikki's Café.

"I liked the location that it was downtown and the atmosphere," Anderson-Levy said.

"I liked the family atmosphere," Esperanza chimed in. "Darren (Larsen), the owner, we'd see him regularly. He has kids and I have kids and he was fine with them sitting here and waiting. My kids have made it a regular habit of coming here."

The Cheese People of Beloit opened at, 431 E. Grand Ave., in May 2012 with Nikki's Cafe as a tenant. In addition to having a storefront, the Cheese People of Beloit's products are found at area farmers markets each week. In 2013, the Cheese People of Beloit became Café Fromage serving a variety of salads, sandwiches, coffee, baked goods and cheese at the same location on East Grand Avenue.

Owner Darren Larsen said the decision comes after months of discussing the business. In short, he said, after expanding the café, the money the business takes in isn't covering expenses.

"The business itself, we've grown very quickly. Maybe too quickly," Larsen said. "Within a very short time we went from a farmer's market business to the cheese shop with the tenants to buying out the other coffee shop to remodeling and opening up Café Fromage."

Larsen said he knows what he will miss most when the business closes.

"Being here and interacting with customers, many of whom I've known for years now and see on a daily basis," Larsen said. "It's not all business, I enjoy being out there."

Roscoe resident Pam Sockness said that she would come weekly with her granddaughters before



## Fairwell Fromage

Whitney Helm/Beloit Daily News  
Judi Patterson, Toni Brown and Moe Patterson are served by Linda Rosenbaum at Cafe Fromage on Friday morning. The cafe will be closing today.

dropping them off at school.

"I like the closeness of it," Sockness said. "The friendliest of the staff is amazing."

Sockness said the morning hangout with her granddaughters is a good bonding experience for the three of them.

First-timer Toni Brown was treated to a birthday breakfast by her parents, Moe and Judi Patterson, who just discovered the café last week.

"We thought it was a unique experience and had good food," Judi said. "We're small town business people and we would want to support it."

Moe and Judi said they were sad to see the business is closing, especially since they just discovered it.

"We were exploring different places in the area and found this," Judi said. "We came in and saw the closed signs and we were bummed."

Brown said she knew Larsen previously, but had never been into the café until Friday morning.

For Larsen, he's going back to being a stay-at-home dad to his three children.

"I'm looking forward to returning to that role for the immediate future," he said. "That was one of the deciding factors. Six days a week for the last four years, it's been difficult for the kids to do scouts and soccer games."

The building which is owned by Larsen, will be sold. Any interested buyers can contact him directly at 608-312-2070.

He added there will be a going out of business sale happening in the coming weeks. Updates can be found on the business' Facebook page.