

End Of An Era: Laurie Chavez, Laurie's Place staff say tearful goodbye Saturday

by Dan Brannan, Content Director
December 30 2017 1:09 PM





EDWARDSVILLE - Patrons will say goodbye to Laurie's Place, an Edwardsville institution, with a large-scale event Saturday at the business at 228 N. Main St. in Downtown Edwardsville.

Bands are set to begin performing at 2 p.m. for a day/evening final party at Laurie's.

Owner Laurie Chavez has made a decision to retire and sell the building to attorney Randy Gori. The future plans for the building have not yet been announced by Gori.

Earlier, Laurie released the following statement on Facebook which appropriately summed up her feelings about her staff, customers and retirement:

“Hi Everyone.....I want to say thank you to everyone who has walked thru my doors in the last 21 years! I have met so many amazing people, made so many friends that have become like family to me. To the hundreds of talented musicians that have played my venue I say thank you.....

“I have been truly blessed to have worked side by side with the most amazing staff anyone could ever imagine. I could not have survived this long without their loyalty and support. We are truly a family.

“All this said, I've decided to retire from this crazy wonderful business as of Jan 1. Stop by and see us, take a pic, hug your favorite person! Thanks for the memories everyone!”

Laurie said in a recent interview she felt after 21 years of being in the restaurant/bar business it was time to call an end to her career.

“We had a great run and Mr. Gori made me a great offer and before I had always said no but at the first part of December, I decided it was just time for me. I have great employees here and didn't want to put them out of a job, but it has been on my mind for a long time now. I know the end of the year is a bad time time of year to do it, but it was the right time for me.”

Laurie named off several staff members who mean everything to her, but in fairness, we decided to wait and catch her on camera for the final group of names. She said she loves all her employees and customers. The employees and customers are like “family” to her.

“Mo's Pleasure” became a household name at Laurie's Place and band members are like brothers to Laurie and part of her family. She saluted the boundless amount of talented bands and musicians who graced her stages at Laurie's Place over the years.

She said the talented musicians helped build her business and make “Laurie's Place” special.

One of the most famous musicians who graced the Laurie's Place stage was actor Tim Robbins one night while he was filming a movie in Downtown Edwardsville. Robbins is possibly most known for his portrayal of Andy Dufresne in The Shawshank Redemption, a movie about an innocent man who escapes from prison and has a strong kinship with a man named “Red” Morgan Freeman. Dufresne escapes from prison, while Red is released after his escape. After utter agony in prison, the two end up free and peaceful on a beach in Mexico. He went up to perform a couple songs and ended up performing almost to closing time he enjoyed it so much.

“Tim played to about midnight and we usually stop at 10 o'clock,” she said. “I don't think he wanted to leave the stage. Tim Robbins was so down to earth and nice. It was so packed the night he played here.”

Laurie said today would be “a no makeup day for me” and a sentimental occasion.

“I am going to have a lot of tears in my eyes today,” she said. “I am hoping people will come out and hug their favorite person in our bar today.”



[Steven Spencer also contributed to this story.](#)