

# **IHOP owner expresses sadness over upcoming late August closure**

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WOOD RIVER - Kurt Connelly, the long-time owner of IHOP in Wood River, said the decision of the company not to renew his license at the 1201 E. Edwardsville Road building, has been difficult for him and the employees.

Connelly said he loves the customers and staff he has come in contact with over the past 25 years as owner.

"We have a lot of long-term employees, including some with 20-plus years," Connelly said. "This is very hard on me. I had a manager for 23 years who quit a year ago. My franchise agreement expires this month."

Connelly said IHOP makes its decisions to renew or not renew licenses on a case-by-case basis.

"There are a lot of variables involved in IHOP's decision," he said. "I don't know the exact formula, but some is volume, some involves market and what is available. Unfortunately, I don't fit into that strategy. It isn't just sales specifically. IHOP has a long-term vision and plan."

The IHOP store opened in Wood River in 1973. For Connelly, it was his first IHOP restaurant, so it is most difficult to close.

"Some customers have been coming in since the day I owned it and before," Connelly said. "It's funny, I run into people who worked at the store 30 or 40 years ago and worked there as a kid. I have even second-generation employees working for me and I am close to a third generation."