



QUEENS NEWS

Jackson Hts. pharmacy owner Frank Buonagurio will happily reopen just two blocks from his burnt-out former location.



Refills up the block

Gutted drugstore to reopen

BY ELI ROSENBERG
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HERE'S a dose of good news.

A beloved Jackson Heights drugstore destroyed by a catastrophic fire in April is bouncing back with plans to reopen two blocks from its former home.

Frank Buonagurio, who has owned Frank's Pharmacy for 23 years, will start filling prescriptions again in late September at a corner storefront on 37th Ave. and 77th St., he said. It has housed a pharmacy since 1930.

"Everybody knows everybody here," an overjoyed Buonagurio, 60, said.

The stubborn blaze that gutted the Bruson Building on 37th Ave. at the corner of 75th St. caused Frank's to sustain \$1 million in damages. It also forced dozens of businesses to relocate or close for good.

Buonagurio, who moved to the neighborhood 15 years ago, contemplated an early retirement until a broker connected him to the landlord at the prime corner space, which

had been another family-run pharmacy until it closed in September 2013.

Landlord Eddie Kaminsky, who owns the strip between 77th and 78th Sts., said he nearly signed a lease with a national bank before settling on Frank's.

"Even though the bank was going to pay better money, I thought it would be better to have a small business," he said. "I just felt Frank would be a better fit for the building."

Many mom-and-pop pharmacies have shuttered across the city in the face of the proliferation of corporate drugstores, like Rite Aid and Duane Reade, and competition from mail-order drug outlets, industry experts said.

There are 45 independent pharmacies in Jackson Heights, though citywide numbers decline every year, according to the Pharmacists Society of the State of New York.

"The current environment is difficult for mom-and-pops," said society president Charles Catalano.

But Buonagurio, who keeps his prices lev-



el with or below those of corporate chains, said he's confident his business will survive.

"The thing the big guys can't do — they can't give you service. It's that simple. This is what we do," Buonagurio said. "Everybody knows everybody's name here. People still want that."

Other Bruson Building tenants have not fared as well in finding new storefronts on the popular corridor.

Jerry Crisci, who owns Armondo's Italian Restaurant, said he was eyeing a space across the street until he found out it was renting for 50% more than he was paying.

He says he may move back into the Bruson Building after it reopens in the future.

Frank's will open its new digs on Sept. 20.

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