

Autistic, nonverbal *AND THRIVING*



Nathan Buhl (right) and his father, Mark, file books away into the computer on Wednesday at The Next Chapter Book Mart in Holland. PHOTOS BY CODY SCANLAN/HOLLAND SENTINEL

How one local bookstore hopes to educate Holland

Austin Metz

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HOLLAND — It’s been less than a year since Mark and Amy Buhl took over Holland Book Mart on Washington Avenue, giving their 28-year-old son, Nathan, who is autistic and nonverbal, a place to excel.

Nathan, who communicates using the rapid prompting method and a letter board, has always been able to participate in certain aspects of a job, but others are harder.

So, they decided, why not buy a business where he could work?

The family took over Holland Book Mart on Nov. 1. Not long after, they started the process of finding a larger space. They dreamed of adding more seating for customers and developing a section dedicated to education about autism. They also considered a potential name change.

“My parents have always wanted the best for me,” Nathan told The Sentinel. “They are strong advocates for me. That has been true my whole life. They want me to have meaningful employment. They bought a bookstore for me to work at. They are thinking of me all the time.”

Last weekend, their dreams came to fru-



Visitors to The Next Chapter Book Mart can now enjoy a bigger space and a new seating area. The store is located on Chicago Drive.

ition when Nathan, Amy and Mark reopened the bookstore under a new name — The Next Chapter Book Mart — and in a new location at 710 Chicago Drive, Suite 250.

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Bookstore

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“I think it took a little bit longer than we thought, so we underestimated how much work it would be,” Amy said. “But we were very thankful for different friends and volunteers who came out and helped us pack up books and move boxes.”

Amy said it took close to two weeks to move out of the old location and several additional weeks to move into the new location — but they’re happy with how it turned out.

After getting additional signage and hanging local artwork, the business will hold a grand opening in July. For now, they’re open 10 a.m.-6 p.m. Tuesdays and Thursdays and 10 a.m.-4 p.m. Wednesdays, Fridays and Saturdays.

According to Amy, the biggest difference is space. The new store gives customers more room to walk around and space to enjoy a seating area.

So far, she said, they’ve received lots of positive feedback, with many customers commenting on how conveniently the new location is placed in proximity to Holland and Zeeland.

But the family has more dreams to pursue.

“I know Nathan is going to want to still do so much more,” Amy said. “I know he wants to do more things with this learning center concept and he also wants to get more involved in the finances and the books for the

store and learn that. We ultimately want to make those things accessible so he can participate in some of that. There’s definitely more to come.”

The family is especially grateful for the community’s support.

“Really to express my feelings, I need to say that were life easy, perfect grace wouldn’t be necessary,” Nathan said. “Moments, trials, and hardships make me love Jesus, (and) others more. I want to greatly thank everyone. You are so appreciated.”

— Contact freelancer Austin Metz at ametz@gannett.com.

Outdoor Drive-In Worship Service
¼ mile North of Fennville on 58th Street.
June 18, 2023 - Lords Day 24

