

Jerome candy shop expands to Old Town

By BRODIE GREENE The Verde Independent
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COTTONWOOD — There are a lot of reasons one might go to a candy store — for one's own children, corporate gifts, nostalgia or just to try out the new Dubai Chocolate everyone online has been raving about.

Whatever the reason may be, the trip has become a lot shorter for many Verde Valley residents since Rickeldoris opened a second location in Old Town Cottonwood last June.

Considered one of the oldest businesses in one of the oldest towns in Arizona, Rickeldoris is owned by Artis Roque and husband Tom Blosser. Roque's family has lasting ties to Jerome, she said, but many left when the mine closed in the early 1950s.

"My mother moved back here at the age of 62. She bought a little one-bedroom house. She opened up the candy store and ran it till she was 83," Roque said.

The first Rickeldoris location was opened by Roque's mother, Bertha Rabago, in 1993. Roque and Blosser lived in California at the time. Roque comes from a medical background, while Blosser ran a swimming pool service business.



Owners Artis Roque and Tom Blosser stand behind the counter of the new Rickeldoris location. (VVN/Brodie Greene)

"We were coming out here every other month to help my mother," Roque said. "So we were coming out here all the time and finally we just said 'why don't we just move out there?'"

After learning the business from helping her over the years, the two eventually inherited the store when Bertha Rabago passed away. Running it has since become the couple's full-time jobs, they said.

"I don't even see it as a job, really. It's just a lot of fun," Roque said.

But it is still hard work, as with any business, Blosser added. Thankfully, their staff keep them in the loop on the popular treats, he said. "The girls that for us, they know what's on TikTok and they'll tell us," Blosser said.

If you're looking for a treat, kettlecorn and chocolates are a pretty safe bet. However, they have found that candy preferences vary among age groups. Kids tend to be interested in trendy treats they've seen online, while older folks tend to seek out the retro candies they can't find elsewhere.

The duo had discussed the opening of a second location for several years, but the site in Old Town Cottonwood was actually first pointed out by Bertha Rabago, while sitting outside of the coffee shop.

"She'd say that specific building and that specific spot, She'd say, 'That would be a good little candy store,'" Roque said.

There were different businesses in the location over the years, but when it became available, they acted immediately. The couple intends to keep both locations open and within the family well into the future.

"These two things are going to be around for a long, long time," Roque said.

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