



The family behind the Hills Family Drug stores (left to right) Gia Cipriani, Phillip Guastella and Diana Guastella pose for a photo in celebration of the local chain's 50 years in business. PHOTO SUBMITTED

# Owner of Hills Drug Orland looks back on 50 years in business

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For Phillip Guastella, 2015 marked a big achievement.

The owner of three south suburban pharmacies, including Hills Drug Orland at 15300 West Ave. in Orland Park, Guastella saw his pharmacy business turn 50 years old.

Hired as a staff druggist at Hills Family Drug in Hickory Hills in 1965, he eventually took ownership of the pharmacy in 1973.

"I'm proud of it," he said of growing the business over the years. "When I got out of school, I didn't have two nickels to rub together. When I got out of pharmacy school, [my wife and I] had two children and not a lot of money. We grew the business, and we grew with our lives.

"It's been a lot of fun, and I've really enjoyed the people, the profession."

Over the years, he said he has enjoyed the little things, too, like helping the customers understand why they were on certain medications and how to take them properly.

"It's been a real challenge, and I've really enjoyed every day," he said.

The Orland location opened in 2004.

"Orland was a new venture for us," he said.

While he does check in from time to time at the Orland shop, he said the lead pharmacist there — Brenda Weston — handles the business the same way he does. It makes sense, considering he first hired her when she was 16 years old to work at one of his drug stores.

Over the last 50 years, Guastella said he has had the opportunity to serve three generations of customers. And getting to know them has been one of his favorite parts of the job.

"We have the children's children coming to the store," he said. "It's been family relationships and treating people right for many years. That's how we survive.

"It's the service level that attracts people. It's not a numbers system; you talk to the pharmacist. We know

so many people by their first names."

He estimated that his pharmacists know roughly 85 percent of the customers by their first and last names and who their children and grandchildren are.

"Going to work is a lot of fun for me, because I really enjoy talking to people," he said.

The drug stores also have become a family business, as his daughter, Gia Cipriani, graduated from pharmacy school and came to work for her father.

Guastella estimates the drug stores have filled close to 5 million prescriptions over the years. Some of the services Hills Family Drug provides include: 10 percent discounts for senior citizens who do not have insurance; free delivery within a 5-mile radius; and "house charging," allowing customers to put all their medications on one monthly bill.

For more information about Hills Drug Orland call (708) 226-9840.