

## Marshfield: Businesses deal with downtown detours

*From the Marshfield News Herald, April 2009*

Although most owners of businesses along Marshfield's South Central Avenue reconstruction area said they were doing OK, they worried that detours and closed roads downtown would combine with the recession to cause a retailing perfect storm.

"Me, I can keep my restaurant," said Skender Ademi, owner of the Marshfield Family Restaurant, 443 S. Central Ave. "But when people lose their jobs and don't go out to eat, I worry for my employees. I can schedule fewer hours and I do the work, but I don't want to lose my employees," Ademi said.

When the reconstruction began in April 2009, business plummeted at Rae Baxter's Fashion Shop, 345 S. Central Ave., said owner Carol Knauf. But when the weather warmed and people grew more accustomed to the detours, the store traffic picked up, Knauf said.

Knauf said that city Director of Public Works Dan Knoeck and state Department of Transportation Project Engineer Scott Hintz continuously checked in with business owners about concerns. "These guys were just tremendous. They really worked with us when we had a problem."

For businesses that are destinations, like Mitten's, 171 S. Central Ave., which sells appliances, furniture and electronics, customers were willing to navigate to reach the location, said owner Bill Mitten.

"If you're from this area, you know how to get around this kind of construction to get to the place," Mitten said.

But where there are shops that attract curious customers who walk or drive past, those shops might have a difficult time, said Jesse Robinson, co-owner of Pandora, 242 S. Central Ave. Pandora sells gifts, apparel, artwork and imported merchandise.

"It can be a challenge," said Robinson. "We figured when it is all over and done with, the street will be beautiful. It'll be a win-win for everyone."

To encourage shoppers to the area, a coupon book was developed featuring 34 participating Central Avenue businesses, and it was available at stores, said Denise Sonnemann, executive director of Main Street Marshfield.

The back of each coupon had an entry blank for prize drawings sponsored by the Marshfield Area Chamber of Commerce and Industry – one \$50 and two \$25 gift certificates to be drawn on each of three dates during the construction. During Hub City Days, winners were drawn for one \$500 and two \$250 gift certificates.

"No purchase necessary," Sonnemann said.