

## **Ralph's Donut Shop 2020**

By Lindsay McReynolds | Herald-Citizen: 2 January 2020

A popular longtime donut shop that's been a tradition among many in Cookeville and beyond has new ownership.

Ralph's Donut Shop was purchased by John and Sandy MacDonald, Monday for \$600,000 from Mark and Cynthia Pullum, the daughter of the original owner for whom the shop is named.

"We're super excited about it," Sandy said from the counter of Ralph's Thursday morning. "We're keeping everything the same. The recipes will be the same. Whatever they've been doing has been working wonderfully."



(Pictured: New co-owner of Ralph's Donuts Sandy MacDonald, left, and previous co-owner Mark Pullum hold a tray of Sandy's favorite pastry on the menu, the butter twist)

Former owner Mark Pullum was there Thursday morning as well, helping the MacDonalds adjust to

ownership of the popular pastry shop.

"The community needs to know it's going to stay the same," Mark said. "We want them to be as successful as we were."

Sandy, a Baxter native and Upperman High School graduate, said she and her husband worked for an oil and gas company out of Houston, Texas, for many years before deciding to purchase Ralph's.

"I wanted to be home with my family more," Sandy said. "It's part of God's plan."

The couple has three children, John, 21; Hadley, 5; and Jude, 3.

"I just like people," she said. "I don't know much about pastries and donuts, but I want to learn."

"My husband, his mother owned a small business," she said. "This is his niche. He really likes tradition."

The Pullums listed the shop for sale in spring of last year, and the MacDonalds are the first people outside the original owner's family to own it.

"We know Mark and Cynthia were selective about who they sold it to," Sandy said. "We take it very seriously."

In addition to being a popular stopping point for everyone from politicians to Tech students, Ralph's Donuts has been winner of several awards in its 58-year history.

The shop earned the title of "Best Donuts in Tennessee" from among about 40 other donut shops in an online statewide "Donut Brawl" in 2015.

But Pullum said they've never pursued the accolades the shop has received.

"We never went after that stuff," Mark said. "A customer brought that in, saying we were 23rd in the country and number one in the state."

Mark said he's going to focus on farming now that he's sold the shop, but emphasized that he's only a phone call away if the MacDonalds need him.

"Y'all are keeping our promise, what Cynthia promised Ralph — to keep it open," Mark said.

Hours at Ralph's Donut Shop at 59 S. Cedar Ave. will remain the same, 5 a.m. to 11:30 p.m., Tuesday through Saturday.

\*Read more about the people and places in Putnam Co. & surrounding areas at:

<http://www.ajlambert.com>