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TOM WALSH

'Scream 4' gives owners of new Northville bookshop a huge thrill

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Dan and Kathy Comaianna had not even opened the doors of their quirky new shop, the Next Chapter Bookstore & Bistro in downtown Northville, when a couple of location scouts for film director Wes Craven stopped by in late April.

Craven needed a bookstore to shoot a scene for "Scream 4," the latest in his series of popular horror films starring Courteney Cox, Neve Campbell and other big names.

The location scouts loved the shop. They loved the name. Craven did, too, when he flew in to check it out a day or two later. A deal was quickly struck.

This week, the Next Chapter becomes a film set, with Craven, Cox, Campbell and others scheduled to shoot there Tuesday and Wednesday.

And this is just the latest twist in the Comaiannas' topsy-turvy tale of birthing a small family business.

Right out of the movies

Dan Comaianni always wanted to open an espresso bar, but never did he imagine that this "Next Chapter" of his life would bring a storm, a flood and "Scream 4" to his quaint little shop.

And that's all before Comaianni and his family have even had a chance to hold a grand opening for the Next Chapter Bookstore & Bistro at 141 E. Main.

"It's wonderful," Comaianni said Friday amid a frenzy of electricians, carpenters and set decorators scurrying around the store, preparing it for a movie scene to be shot there this week. "They say they want to help us out, spend their money here. They even want us, my chef, to make the props, like cakes and pastries, used in a scene."

As we sat in the shop, temporarily closed to the public and surrounded by yellow-and-black crime scene tape warning "Police Line Do Not Cross," Dan and his wife, Kathy, and daughter Lindsay Comaianni shared the improbable story of the Next Chapter's journey from fuzzy idea to weather disaster to movie star.

Dan Comaianni, 56, and Kathy, 54, of Clinton Township were a real estate broker and a secretary,

respectively, during their early years of marriage. When Kathy got the bug to open a nail shop and Dan couldn't talk her out of it, she bought a small place and then, 10 years ago, opened a much bigger one. Today the Pintura Salon Spa on 18 Mile Road in Clinton Township has 16 hair stylists and three nail technicians plus facialists and massage therapists.

As the real estate business softened a few years ago, Dan decided to explore his coffee-shop dream. He and Kathy looked into franchises such as Biggby, but Kathy told him, "We're on-the-go people. What would you do all day after the morning rush? Would just coffee be too boring?"

The scouts, then the flood

They heard about a coffeeshop-bookstore in Plymouth and tried to buy it, but that didn't pan out. So they did some research, liked the demographics of Northville, added pastries and panini sandwiches and other goodies to the coffee and books, and prepared for a low-key opening May 3 of the Next Chapter.

But a week or so before that, two location scouts for the movie "Scream 4" popped into the place when Kathy was working.

Looking for a bookstore to shoot a scene, the scouts were wowed by the concept, and even the name, of the Next Chapter. They quickly phoned director Wes Craven to say, "You've got to come see this bookstore."

Kathy didn't know who Craven was, but when she mentioned the visit at home that night, daughter Lindsay, 27, exclaimed, "Mom, Wes Craven is huge!"

In the next few weeks, as the Comaiannis quietly opened the Next Chapter to the public, Craven made several visits and struck a deal for the shop to be used in early July to shoot a scene.

Dan won't reveal the financial details, but said the "Scream 4" producers "are being fair and generous."

"We also felt it would be an honor to be picked for the movie," he said. "And the timing was right, as far as the flood."

Ah, the flood. That was a real plot twist.

After the Comaiannis and Craven had made their deal, a nasty thunderstorm struck the Detroit area on June 4. Rain collected on the roof of the Next Chapter, seeped into the store, and soon "it was like a rain forest in here," Dan said. There was lots of damage to ceiling, floors, books, everything. The store had to close for repairs.

Bonus benefits

Ugh. The Comaiannis had to deal with insurance claims, and wondered whether Craven would still want to shoot there.

He did, and as Dan Comaianni said, the timing was good. Craven wanted to repaint the chocolate-brown walls a brighter aqua shade anyway. And replace a bunch of lights. And replace a clock behind the desk with a mural of the Next Chapter logo. So by doing a topsy-turvy makeover for the film set, and then putting the shop back together, the movie company is helping to shoulder the storm fix-up costs.

An added bonus: Daughter Lindsay and some of her friends likely will appear in the film as baristas,

joining a star-studded cast that includes Courteney Cox, Neve Campbell, David Arquette, Hayden Panettiere, Emma Roberts and Rory Culkin.

Dan may have a role, too, playing himself as the owner. But on Friday, he didn't seem to know much about it. Or care.

Unless there are sinister plot twists ahead, he sees a happy outcome at the Next Chapter.

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