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Getting a Second chance

By GAIL SWEET
Burlington County Times

Valentine's Day is over, but for book lovers a new romance is heating up in Rancocas Woods.

Second Time Books, more of a boutique than a store, is ready to win the hearts of readers.

Owner James Morel has assembled more than 20,000 used books that are sure to please the finickiest customers.

Put away the image of dust, books with tattered covers and a tinge of mold. These books are pristine. Second Time Books, located in a former art gallery, is light, airy and even has loft. Classical music plays in the background. Morel, who has lived in Mount Laurel with his family for 15 years, brings his background in retail into play. "People take their time and look at things. They are never sure what's going to be here."

This is Morel's second bookstore venture. His first store sold new books. "I couldn't compete with the big boys but I can compete with used books. Ninety percent of my stock is not duplicated in chain stores."

Second Time Books reflects Morel's love of history, science fiction and fantasy but all genres are well represented. Currently on display are works by J.R.R. Tolkien, one of his favorite authors. "I've always been a reader and my wife and children are readers."

The like-new books in the fiction room are arranged by writer. The non-fiction books are arranged by subject with volumes on display to pique customer interest. History books are shelved chronologically. Children's books, literature, religion and philosophy are located in the loft with a view of the downstairs.

Morel is quick to point out that Second Time Books is not a rare bookstore.

Almost everything costs \$8 or less. "My goal is to provide quality books at reasonable prices." Weather permitting there are also bargain books on carts by the entrance that will make you want to take home an armful. Prices start at \$1, the books range from biographies to early novels by today's hottest authors.

Owning a bookstore has added benefits. "People who come into used bookstores are nice people," according to Morel. The warm and friendly atmosphere has also resulted in Morel being the recipient of hopeful author's manuscripts.

"I've had quite a number of customers ask me to read their work and make comments. I've done it but always tried to be diplomatic."

Second Time Books can be accessed online at www.AbeBooks.com, an online book

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marketplace representing more than 13,000 stores worldwide, with its headquarters in Victoria, British Columbia. Click on "bookstores" and follow the geographical prompts and you'll be able to explore and search Second Time Books inventory. For book lovers, however, a visit to Second Time Books is a must do experience.

If You Go

Second Time Books

Where: Rancocas Woods Village Shops, 123 Creek Road, Store No. 4, Mount Laurel

When: Tuesday-Friday, 10 a.m.-6 p.m.; Saturday, 10 a.m.-5 p.m.; (closed Sunday and Monday)

Information: (856) 234-9335 or e-mail: Nextbook@aol.com

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Rating: Low High

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