

RESOLUTION No. 2018-

RELATIVE TO HONORING GEORGE OPTICAL CO.

BY:

Councilman Bill Kennedy
Councilman Ezra Scott
Councilman Kenny Tompkins
Councilman Chris Voccio
Chairman Andy Touma

WHEREAS, When Joseph George opened his one room office upstairs on the 400 block of Portage Rd and Niagara Street in 1938 – still known as the George Optical Co. – his entire stock was wired-framed eyeglasses. Storage was not a problem when the whole inventory could fit into a small box; and

WHEREAS, In 1939 it moved to 1104 Niagara Street until moving to 363 Third Street in 1945, a busy block bordered by the New York Central Railroad crossing at the south end and the bridge over the hydraulic canal at the other end; and

WHEREAS, In the early 1960's it opened up another location at 1525 Pine Avenue and still operated the location on Third Street until the fire in 1966 permanently closed the Third Street location. The 1525 Pine Avenue location became the only location until Louie Fernandez bought the building at 1523 and the rights to the name George Optical Co. on September 20, 1971. Today, three-quarters of a century after George cut the ceremonial ribbon, the store is still located at 1523 Pine Ave. – and there's mind-boggling improvements in the hi-tech process and inventory; and

WHEREAS, Louie Fernandez, who launched his career with the George Optical Co. in the 1940s, as a teenager sweeping the floors. In 1949, he joined the optical firm as a partner and eventually acquired the business; and

WHEREAS, It's now owned and operated by James Fernandez of Niagara Falls, a licensed optician and a contact lens practitioner who started working for his father in 1978. "I kind of grew up in the business," the current owner says, recalling the sea of changes over the years including the days when lens the lens were shaped by a grinding wheel; and

WHEREAS, In sharp contrast from earlier days, Fernandez explains when a person first went to an ophthalmologist and then to the optical store for the glasses, optometrists under contract are now on staff a couple times per week to conduct comprehensive eye exams. "So the changes have made it a full service here," he added; and

WHEREAS, If you ask him what separates the independent operator from the chains operating out of shopping malls and other centers, Fernandez will cite his company's track record of providing a quality product at an affordable price. It also helps that if you're dealing with Fernandez, you can count on him being there when you return for whatever reason. At other places, it's often someone different that assisted you from the previous visit. "Personal service is what we strive to provide," he added; and

WHEREAS, Over the years, Fernandez has followed in his dad's footsteps, taking an active role in community endeavors. He is a former president of the Pine Avenue Business Association and a past member of the Niagara Catholic High School board. He also has worked closely with the St. Mary's Hospital Board of Associates, a fundraising and community relations arm of the hospital; and

WHEREAS, Family has always been important to James, as is evident in any casual conversation. His wife, Joni, is a kindergarten teacher in the Lewiston-Porter School District. A son Jim works for a Manhattan-based global financial services firm, a daughter Angelina is a graduate of Niagara University College of Hospitality and Tourism Management and another son, Louis, with a deep interest in music, is pursuing a career in theater.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that this City Council does hereby honor George Optical Co. for over 80 years in business serving the residents of Niagara Falls and surrounding areas.

Kennedy _____ Scott _____ Tompkins _____ Voccio _____ Touma _____