

# Empire Beauty School set for move to Route 61 location

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Andy Matsko/staff photo Graphic designer Janelle Klitsch, left, and Angela Gregory, graphic design manager at Empire Education Group, hang posters at the new location for Empire Beauty School.



Andy Matsko/staff photo Patrick J. Dougherty, vice president of property services for Empire Education Group, explains the layout of the new student salon area at the new location for Empire Beauty School.

Empire Beauty School is moving out of the city and into a larger location at the headquarters of Empire Education Group near Fairlane Village mall in East Norwegian Township.

The beauty school has had a presence in Pottsville since 1985. The move is an opportunity for students of the school - about 40 are currently enrolled - to more closely experience a real-world salon setting and use more modern technology.

"Students will be coming here on Monday morning," said Angela Watson, director of public relations for Empire Education Group, the parent company of Empire Beauty Schools.

There are 109 schools in 22 states. Of those, 20 are in Pennsylvania, Watson said.

With the new location at 396 Pottsville/Saint Clair Highway along Route 61, there is 7,700 square feet of space - 700 square feet more than the students currently have - along with three manicure stations, two pedicure spas, hydraulic lift chairs, stainless steel countertops for individual stations, three classrooms, offices and a break area.

Jim Buhay, project manager with Heim Construction, Pottsville, the general contractor, said work at the site started in late August and took 11 weeks. The occupancy inspection is today, which will give the green light for occupancy if the site passes inspection, he said.

Workers were at the site Tuesday finishing connecting wires and other work related to the air conditioning units, he said. LED lights and rubber and cork flooring in the salon and other areas can ease the strain on the feet of the students. The lobby area has vinyl plank laminate that looks like real wood.

Some of the work also included demolishing the former site of CosmoProf that had a presence at the site. That store moved into part of the former Hollywood Video in Pottsville Park Plaza, Norwegian Township, earlier this year.

Watson said a final cost was not available for the project.

Empire Education Group's corporate offices moved to different wing of the building nearby, Watson said.

Patrick Dougherty, vice president of property services for Empire Education Group, said the students and customers are going to like the changes from the old site. The site is more modern and offers a cleaner look to it, he said.

John O'Neill, director of the student salon for Empire Education Group, said the design and equipment used by students will get them better acquainted with what they might experience when they get a job.

For example, the individual stations are spaced farther apart than at the city location. Students will also have the chance to do pedicures, something they can't do now.

Each of the three classrooms has a white board and each room has a different layout tailored to different learning styles. For instance, one has no desks while two can accommodate 25 people. The third has room for 50.

Incorporating night classes is something being considered. Hours at the city location are 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Monday through Friday. Pat Tideman, vice president of field operations for Empire Education Group, said night classes might start by spring 2013.

"We don't really have a target date," she said as she stood in the new site with co-workers during a walking tour.

Brenda Gimbel, executive director of Empire Beauty Schools, Pottsville, said the students can't wait for the experience.

"We're very excited. The students are excited to work in a place that's very modern," she said.

Rachel Holloway, 19, of Pottsville, has about 200 hours of the 1,250 needed to graduate. She has not been at the new location yet but said she's looking forward to it.

"This one's nice and we had it for a long time," she said.

Dougherty said a final decision has not been made about what the company will do with the current site of the Empire Beauty School. Several businesses have expressed interest in the location that is owned by Kenson Realty, Pottsville. He would not disclose the name of the businesses.