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## Local merchant enjoys Thanksgiving prior to holiday shopping season

By RACHEL COLEMAN

• Leader & Times

Nationwide, shoppers hit the stores starting the evening of Thanksgiving, hoping to score great deals on Christmas gifts. Local business woman Dana Hibbs, owner of the Fashion Tree Boutique in downtown Liberal, wasn't among them.

"We like Thanksgiving," she said, noting that the women's apparel and home decor shop had chosen to retain an autumn theme right up through this week.



“I’ll probably come in on Sunday and change my store display windows for Christmas,” said Hibbs.

Despite her “don’t rush it” approach to the holiday season, the Fashion Tree owner has made plans for Christmas shoppers. As part of the downtown initiative “The Rock,” Hibbs will keep longer hours through Christmas, staying open on Thursday evenings until 8:30 p.m. Fashion Tree Boutique and other “The Rock” members will also stay late on Dec. 7, after the Leader & Times-sponsored Christmas parade.

“After the drawing for the car, we’re going to stay open and encourage people to spend a little more time downtown and just check us all out,” Hibbs said. “Maybe some of them have never been into our stores. Hopefully they’ll come in and feel welcome.”

“The Rock” shops will offer “Rock On” specials that evening, Hibbs said, and perhaps even a few drawings.

She’s excited about the parade, the holiday season as a whole, and the ongoing opportunity for community-building through “The Rock.”

“Our goal is to bring more attention to the downtown stores, and the area — not all of them are retail — because there’s a lot of neat stuff going on over here,” Hibbs said. “Right now, our focus is on how we can work together. We’ve already established some great camaraderie.”

When Hibbs and her husband looked for a spot to open her new business six years ago, downtown was her first choice.

“There are some folks who want to choose newer locations, but to me, downtown is a great choice,” she said. “There are available buildings; we were able to buy ours. And there’s something really neat about an old building. When I think about shopping, I think of the downtown area. It’s a tradition, it’s unique to the community, and we just really love it.”

That said, “in this day and age, it’s tough to go it alone. Any help we can get, any cooperation with our fellow merchants, our neighbors here on Kansas Ave., is great,” Hibbs said. “I was so excited when we started The Rock. Now we’re getting beyond just waving at each other across the street, to getting acquainted.”

This weekend, Hibbs and her family have made time for Thanksgiving, but she is ready to get into the game helping her customers prepare for Christmas over the coming weeks. With clothing, jewelry, purses and accessories, the Fashion Tree Boutique aims to “live up to its name,” Hibbs said. But the store also sells a line of candles, unique home products such as scented laundry soaps and cleaners and decor. Then there’s the baby boutique, with every sort of cute clothing imaginable for the small set.

“I’ve already set out a few nativity items in the store, for sale, but we’ll have more as we concentrate on Christmas,” Hibbs said. With “The Rock” as an additional source of strength and inspiration, “I’m just really excited about the Christmas shopping season,” she said. “The parade is going to be great, and ‘Rock On ... after the parade’ will be a lot of fun, too. I think it’s going to be a really good thing. To me, downtown is the heart of the city, so it needs to be strong.”

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