

Local businesses adapt to COVID-19 during holidays

by **Andrews Mclellan**
staff writer

Throughout the holiday season, businesses and stores in Oxford generally stay very busy. According to a study made by Gallup, the data shows that an average American Family will spend around 750 dollars around the holidays. However, with the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, the future is uncertain for many local small businesses.

“The holidays are going to look different this year. Like most retailers, I wish I had a crystal ball,” Amanda Hyneman, owner of Neilson’s Department Store, said.

Hyneman explained that the store prepared for the holiday season like usual in terms of staff.

“We bought conservatively because we knew football crowds would be smaller, and we would have less foot traffic on the weekends,” Hyneman said. “Business is definitely picking up and we expect the same trend during the holidays.”

According to Hyneman, she is 100% sure that COVID-19 will affect the shoppers and her business. Neilson’s had an open house on Black Friday with specials throughout the day and plans to be open on Sundays throughout the holiday season.

“Some customers might be apprehensive about getting out and about and choose to do shopping online, but I hope they try local businesses first,” Hyneman said.

Hyneman also encourages shoppers to go to the Square during the holidays and shop around for what she calls “a seasonal gift”. Elliot Lane is a children’s store on Jackson avenue, and owner Kari Bailey has prepared for the holiday season in several ways.

“In addition to making sure that we have plenty of typical inventory to get through the busy season, we make special efforts to curate holiday specific gift selections,” Bailey said. “I feel that it is important to find new and different items each year that are exciting and unique to our store. We also decorate the store so that it reflects a festive feel when our customers are shopping.”

In addition to her clothing, shoes, and accessories, Bailey has added gifts like sleeping bags, boom boxes, arts & crafts kits, and Christmas pajamas.

“I am expecting more people to shop earlier, and we have already been doing a large amount of Christmas gift wrapping,” Bailey said.

Oil Shed (Oxford Interior Landscape) on North Lamar is a garden and plant supply store that offers customers services to prepare their homes for the holidays.

“We will offer fresh garland for doors and mantles, fresh wreaths, Christmas ornaments, tree garland, holiday plants, and gifts for teachers, relatives, and friends,” Wendy Carmean, Oil Shed manager, said.

According to Carmean, people enjoy shopping at local establishments, and customers appreciate being able to talk with knowledgeable sales associates for specialized products that can not be found everywhere.

“Plants and holiday decor such as fresh garland and wreaths are difficult to purchase online,” Carmean said.

According to Carmean, Oil Shed is also working hard to make shopping much easier for people during COVID-19.

“Customers may call us and tell us what they need, and we offer curbside pickup,” Carmean said.

Other local business owners are working to make their small businesses have successful holiday seasons as well, including Courtney Gordon, owner of the Lily Pad. The Lily Pad is a unique gift shop on the Oxford Square where shoppers can find items, such as candle, kitchen decor, jewelry and clothing.

“Oxford is such a special place and during the holiday season the square is magical,” Gordon said.

“Many people are shopping local this year and we now have an online store: lilypadoxford. We hope people will shop online if they are not willing to get out in person.”



The Lily Pad, founded in 2000 in Clarksdale, Mississippi, opened their location on the Oxford square in 2002. The store houses sorority merchandise, unique gifts, clothing, accessories and lifestyles pieces.



The Oil (Oxford Interior Landscape) Shed offers customers indoor and outdoor plants, pots, seasonal flowers and other natural interior decoration and gifts, along with specializing in outdoor curb appeal. Wreaths, candles, pillows and antique finds all are offered by the Oil Shed during the holiday season.



Neilson’s department store on the square has become an iconic local establishment, as Oxford’s and the South’s oldest retail store. Neilson’s has offered clothing, shoes and accessories for men and women since 1839. In addition to traditional retail, Neilson’s also offers customers cosmetics, seasonal gifts, and home decorations.