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FEATURED

Small shops serve up big changes this year

By HILLARY GAVAN Senior staff writer
Dec 22, 2020



At Pizzazz Gift & Apparel Boutique, 313 State St., owner Christine Drake hangs up clothing. The pandemic forced Drake to launch a new website, offer Facebook live shopping events and more deliveries. It's much-needed changes she said will propel her business ahead in the future.

Hillary Gavan

BELOIT — It's been a unique holiday season for retailers, as small shop owners try their hand at technology and toss in the occasional cocoa bomb as they work to compete for customers with the big online giants.

At Pizzazz Gift & Apparel Boutique, 313 State St., owner Christine Drake launched the store's first website this holiday season at pizzazzbeloit.com. She also started hosting Facebook live shopping events and started making deliveries all in attempts to capture shoppers in the competitive and an increasingly online world.

Drake said it's been challenging, but it's for the best as it is where retailers will be headed in the future.

In her Facebook live events, Drake uses models to show off clothing which people can comment on and purchase. Drake also hits the road, loading up several times a week to travel as far out as Clinton and Orfordville and the Rockton and Roscoe areas to make deliveries. Her biggest sellers remain women's clothing, with some women out East or in other Midwestern states starting to gravitate toward her new website to place orders.

Nikkie Chadwick, owner of Walnut Creek Apparel and Gifts, 406 E Grand Ave., said she's been extremely busy selling all her traditional wares as well as her new cocoa bombs offered by Kim's Creations owner Kim Phetteplace.

Chadwick said he heard everyone was on the hunt for the cocoa bombs this year so she sought out Phetteplace on Facebook. She initially bought 30 which sold, before ordering another 60 which sold out on the first day.

"Right now we have sold 1,000 cocoa bombs in less than a week," Chadwick said.

Chadwick said she's also been selling towels, cutting boards and creative custom ornaments. One hot seller has been her COVID-themed ornaments such as one with the Grinch wearing a mask proclaiming, "stink, stank, stunk."



Brenda Terrones, owner of Rindfleisch Flowers, said her shop has been super busy with business as more people send flowers this holiday season.

“A lot of people are not able to be with their family and loved ones this holiday, and they are sending flowers and plants more than normal. We expected to be busy but we are swamped,” she said.

Terrones said customers have supported the business ever since last spring, sending flowers to those they couldn't see in person.

Business has also been strong at the Nest Egg, 816 E Grand Ave.

“We are thankful, we are pleased and we love our customers. They came out and supported us. Because of that, we are going to be here again,” said Patti Harrer, co-owner at Nest Egg.

This year the Nest Egg began offering curbside pickup for those not comfortable shopping in the store. Many customers called to see if they could pick up gift certificates curbside or to ask if they carried a certain merchandise for pickup.

“We would run out to cars and sometimes we would drop items off at their houses,” Harrer said.

Other hot items were gnomes which many people are collecting, snow globes, reindeer related items, candles and, of course, masks.

“Who knew we would be selling masks? And we sold hundreds of them,” Harrer said.

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