

Shops offer holiday goodies

by Angel Stokes
Battalion staff

The Christmas season means celebrations, Santa Claus and decorations. Two stores in Bryan/College Station specialize in Christmas decorations for any budget.

The Christmas Store, which opened in 1982, and Red River Pottery Christmas Creations, which opened in October, have almost everything for Christmas decorating — except Santa and Mrs. Claus.

The Christmas Store, located on Harvey Road, is a fantasy land of toys, cards, trees and decorations ranging from the traditional to the whimsical, from affordable to ultra-expensive.

Locally owned by "Red" and Lou Cashion, The Christmas Store is not part of the franchise of The Christmas Store shops in Dallas, Houston and other major cities.

"We carry top-of-the-line merchandise at competitive prices," says Bicker Cain, vice president of the Christmas Store. "It's a quality-type thing."

"We're not just a Christmas store, we're an exclusive store."

Designer lines by Henri and Jockline of Italy are carried in the store, as well as hand-made items done by local people, such as the antique dolls and doll clothing by Veta Frinzel.

The Nativity Scene by Henri costs approximately \$6,000. But, Cain says that people usually collect it piece by piece, starting out with the baby Jesus figure which costs about \$80.

He says the store has other Nativity sets that cost from \$11.95 on up.

Another exclusive is the stuffed animals by Jockline of Italy. The Avanti Bear is exclusive, Cain says, because only 450 were made. The store has one of 10 that are in Texas. The bear costs \$1,450 and is a collector's item.

Each Christmas tree in the store has a certain theme — either traditional or non-

traditional. Some of the themes include the toy tree, the clown and circus tree, the Aggie tree, the Victorian tree, the Texas tree and the mouse tree.

A design staff decorates each tree to a certain theme. Prices for a complete tree package range from \$39 to the thousands, he says. Many banks and businesses also have custom trees done. The store also works with churches during Christmas and hopes to expand the consultant service in the future, he says.

While the clown and circus tree costs about \$1,600, individual ornaments can cost as little as 79 cents.

Besides trees and decorations, unusual gifts are available, such as German music boxes or gourmet foods from the Silver Palate in New York. And a line of World Dolls — which makes the Louis Nicole Doll — will soon be available, he says.

The Christmas Store originally opened only for Christmas, but Cain says the store is now open all year. The Christmas season for the store began on Sept. 1 and ends the day after Christmas with a half-price sale.

The store also has a bridal registry, jewelry, antiques and other decorative items. Cain says the store wants to be a trendsetter in design for the area.

"We want people to come in and visit," he says, "not just spend money. It's a store that can't be seen in 15 minutes. People have to really look and take time shopping."

The Christmas Store will sell gifts and decorations for under \$20 at the MSC Craft Center's Christmas Craft Fair.

If you are looking for more country-style, homemade Christmas decorations visit Christmas Creations, located in Woodstone Shopping Center. A designer is available to put together silk flower arrangements, door wreaths or centerpieces to customer's specifications, says store manager Wenhua Nagy.

She says that along with Christmas trees, decorations and crafts, the store carries brass items and fireplace sets as well as seasonal decorations.

A customer can buy a fully-decorated tree for \$500, she says. Also, personalizing trees can be done.

"We will go to a home and decorate the tree for no extra charge," Nagy says. The store also will decorate store windows.

Another theme tree is the chocolate tree that can be decorated in the home for about \$400. The store also stocks items so that customers can do their own designs.

Christmas Creations sells an import tree from Germany — the Vienna Woods Tree — for about \$150. The store also has flocked trees. The trees are first sprayed with glue, she says, then flocked and then sprayed with glue again.

One of the more popular items sold is a bell swag for the door, she says.

Various designs for decorations can be made for as little as \$5 to about a maximum of \$30, she says. Customers can buy straw wreaths, which sell for 99 cents, and make their own.

Future plans may include staying open all year, Nagy says. The store opened during the Christmas season, she says, to see if this area had a market for this type of store. So far, the market has been good.

"I think people want this kind of store, she says. "But it's hard letting them know about us."

Red River Pottery is a franchise out of Marshall, she says, and Christmas Creations is the 14th store. If the store remains after the Christmas season, it will move to a new location and carry merchandise such as linens, wicker, brass, frames,



photo by Dean Saito

One of the many Christmas trees on display at The Christmas Store.

pottery, stoneware and silk flowers.

She says no decisions have been made yet and if the store does remain, it probably will close until sometime after Jan. 1.

Because the store opened in October, seasonal decorations

for Halloween and Thanksgiving also have been sold along with the Christmas merchandise.

"People are more interested in decorations — wreaths and centerpieces — for other holidays now," she says, "not just Christmas."

Local stores set for Christmas rush

by Mary E. Macan
Battalion reporter

It's about that time of year to bring out the dusty jingle bells, start writing Christmas lists and start buying Christmas gifts. The Christmas rush soon will be upon us — or maybe it's already started.

Sharon Kaufhold, co-owner of Containers & More, said people are already shopping for Christmas gifts.

"Sales have started to increase because early Christmas shoppers have started buying," Kaufhold said.

Shala's Apparel Gallery owner Debbi Riley said she has seen an increase in business within the last week. Riley attributes the recent increase to the weather. She said the cold spell puts people in a Christmas mood.

Alan Fredericks of Kelly's Toylane believes the Christmas

rush has begun already.

"This year is better already than last year in terms of sales," he said. "And we anticipate an even greater increase in sales."

Bicker Cain of The Christmas Store said business has increased since September. He credits the early increase to the seasonal products the store carries.

1982 was a slow economic year and some local businesses experienced a slight decrease in Christmas sales.

"The recession hit us last year at about this time and we had a kind of slow year," Fredericks said. "We had some decrease in growth of sales last year compared to 1981. In 1981 people had more money to spend on gifts."

Terry Stegall of Zale's Jewelry said the recession somewhat affected the jewelry market.

"We haven't had a bad year because the jewelry market has been good," he said. "And this year has been a good, strong year."

In light of last year's recession, some local stores have begun promoting Christmas to stimulate buying.

David Pollack of Dillard's said the store's sales are increasing so soon mainly because of some store promotion.

"We are trying to get customers in the gift giving mood earlier," Pollack said.

Although Christmas shoppers already are searching for the perfect gift, the busiest rush is yet to come.

Pollack said the two days following Thanksgiving are typical busy shopping days because it is the traditional start of the holiday season and most consumers are off work.



photo by Dean Saito

Miniature figurines from a porcelain village at The Christmas Store.