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“Big Box Advantages With Local People”



By Sarah Miller
For the JG-TC

MATTOON – Tanner Kroening credits the benefits received from being a locally owned and operated Sears Hometown Store and the revival of the downtown area for allowing him to provide his customers with advantages typically offered at larger stores.

“We offer big box advantages, but with local people and a friendly touch,” Kroening said.

The Mattoon store has been open for just over two years now with Kroening and his wife taking ownership at the start of 2017. His parents, Terry and Jan Kroening, originally opened the store in October 2015. Mattoon had been without a Sears since the closure of the Sears department store in the Cross County Mall the previous year.

“Mattoon had always had a Sears store,” Kroening said. “All of my family had always shopped there and they hated to see it leave.”

The store carries brand-name appliances, tools, and lawn and garden equipment, such as washers and dryers, ovens, refrigerators, lawnmowers, vacuums and other small appliances. Loyal Sears’ customers will recognize many of the brands on the sales floor including Craftsman, Whirlpool and Kenmore.

Sears Hometown Store operates separately from Sears Holdings Corporation, so Kroening’s store is not vulnerable to the corporate store closings or the discontinuation of certain brands, he said.

“We’re 100 percent separate from Sears Holdings,” Kroening said.

The confusion between the two entities hasn’t stopped Kroening from expanding the Mattoon store. He recently added a service department to perform repairs on all major brands either in the store or in a customer’s home. The store also provides service for tools and appliances with lifetime warranties, he said.

The store also offers delivery and

installation on appliance purchases that are made in the store or on the Sears Hometown Store website. Two online kiosks in the store provide access to the complete line of Sears Hometown Store products, and sales associates can sit down with the customer to help them find the products they are looking for.

“It’s another tool for use to show the customer what their options are,” Kroening said.

Products ordered at the store kiosks or directly through www.searshometownstores.com can be shipped to the customer’s home or delivered to the store without shipping charges.

While online ordering is necessary at times as Kroening has limited space on the showroom floor and for storage, he emphasizes that customers can call or come into the store to shop and ask questions in person. The revitalization efforts in downtown Mattoon have made a big difference by bringing more traffic to the downtown area, he said.

“We get people that stop by just to visit,” he said. “It’s good to get the downtown going again. It’s cool to see all the businesses coming back downtown.”

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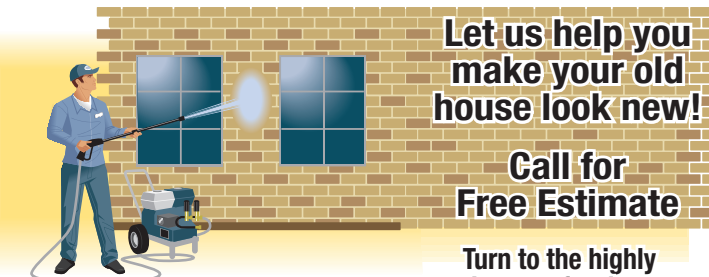
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