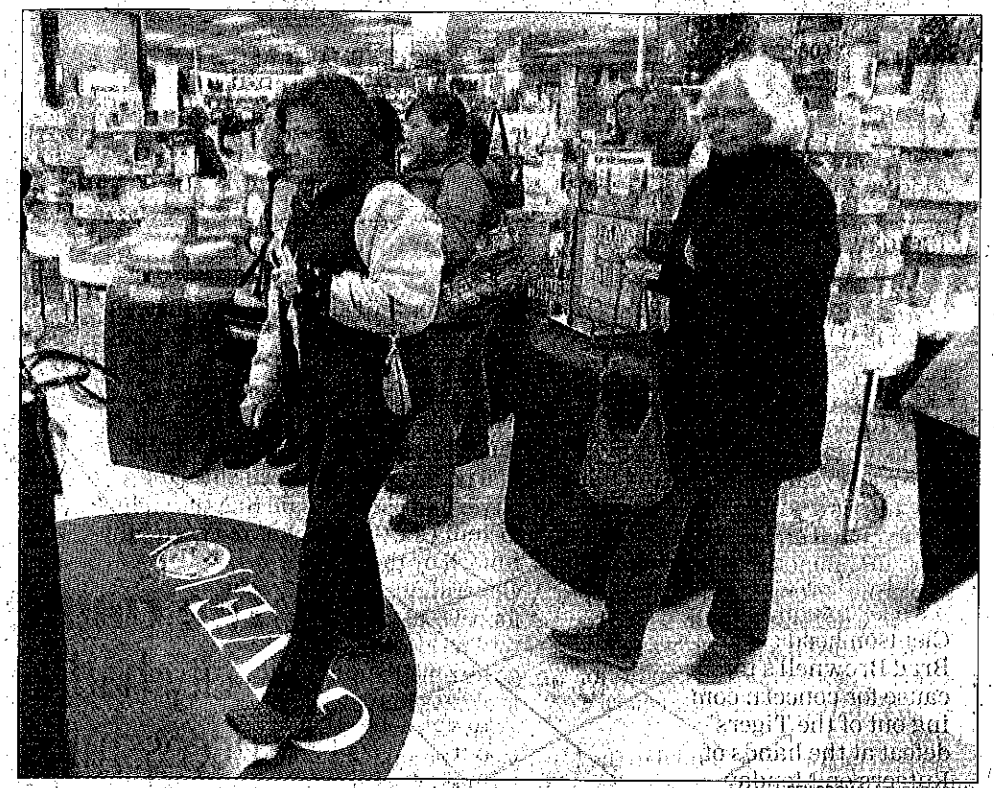


REX BROWN | THE JOURNAL

Shoppers search for bargains at Belk in Seneca on Thursday evening.

Retailers pleased with Black Friday sales figures

BY NORMAN CANNADA
THE JOURNAL

After shoppers flocked to stores to get the special deals on the first official shopping weekend of the Christmas holiday season, retailers said they were happy with the results.

"Black Friday was way bigger — four times the size of what we have done in the past," said Aimee Hill, co-owner of Elkmont Trading Company, which recently moved to a new location on Liberty Drive in Clemson.

Stores began opening as early as Thanksgiving morning, seeking to bring in customers and offering special discounts and other incentives. Many stores let their employees stay home on Thanksgiving and opened on the traditional first shopping day — Black Friday. Locally owned and operated stores had their own special emphasis on Saturday with the annual Small Business Saturday, which emphasized shopping local.

At Belk in Applewood Shopping Center, the store opened at 6 p.m. Thursday night with discounts on boots and other items, as well as gift cards, one of which was worth $1,000 in shopping at Belk. The cards were handed out to the first customers to enter the doors, and then people could scratch them off to find out how much they had won. Travis Shirley of Tamassee won the $1,000 gift card.

"We had a better day than we've ever had at this location," manager Heather Trevino said.

At Sears, Jason Graham was also pleased with the results of the first weekend and said he hopes the trend will continue through the rest of the holiday shopping season.

"So far it is far better than last year," Graham said.

Kathie Black, who started the Strutting Peacock women's boutique in Walhalla in October with her daughter, Melanie Moore, said she was happy with sales from her first Christmas shopping weekend.

"Small Business Saturday did really well for us, so I think it will be a good season," she said.

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