

Retailers: ‘A third of our business is done in December’

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come down from Seattle and Portland to come to the coast and get away. Astoria is a destination, they love coming here.”

Warrenton has also been hit by a wave of recent tourist spending.

“We’ve gotten more tourists in our new location,” said Jim Gannaway, co-owner of Gannaway Brothers Jewelers along with his brother, Tim. “But most of our business is local.” The jewelry business is both seasonal and cyclical.

“We get more busy around the holidays,” said Jim Gannaway.

“Christmas being the biggest, generally a third of our business is done in December.”

Local big box stores have also seen a major boost in holiday business.

“We’re exceeding expectations,” said Jerry Sandness, director at Fred Meyer in Warrenton, “Black Friday was very good, our sales have increased over last year.”

Retailers stay steadfast during sales slump

While sales have heated up across Clatsop County during the holiday season, some are still sluggish from a cold start in the fall.

“This year was not as good as last year,” said Patricia Fagerland, owner of Forsythea, a fine art and artisan décor store in Astoria. Fagerland made the realization after looking over her books detailing the past three years of Black Friday business, noting that her sales had fallen 25 percent compared to last year. “For that particular day it was off, but there’s still time. I see a surge right after Thanksgiving, then another one two weeks before Christmas. It’s a little flat, but I’m not discouraged at all,” Fagerland said. The cycle of up-and-down sales is expected this time of year, according to Kretler, owner of Commercial Street Antiques and Collectibles. “It picks up around Thanksgiving, then it slows down, then it will pick up again,” Kretler said. “In the antiques and collectibles business, I may get dealers that come in and make my day.”

Election impact

Lingering anxiety from a particularly contentious election may have stymied sales for some area businesses.

“I think it has had an impact,” said Fagerland. “I think the fall was a little sluggish leading up to the election.” Others considered the possibility before reaching their own conclusions.

“We had some pretty slow patches during the year,” said Gannaway. “I had a bunch of suppliers that were telling me it was because of the anxiety over the election. I have record back to 1984 and I went and checked.” After running a spreadsheet and doing analysis, Gannaway came away with a new conclusion.

“This wasn’t the only contentious election, there were others, but there’s zero correlation,” Gannaway said.



Luke Whittaker/EO Media Group

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Photos by Luke Whittaker/EO Media Group

LEFT: Patricia Fagerland, owner of Forsythea, saw a 25 percent decline in Black Friday sales, but is optimistic that the best shopping days are still ahead. “It’s a little flat, but I’m not discouraged at all,” Fagerland said. RIGHT: Tim and Jim Gannaway are the owners of Gannaway Brothers. After some “slow patches” Jim Gannaway is cautiously optimistic after a recent rise in the U.S. GDP growth rate. “If you end up with the economy recovering at the end of the year then you have a barn-burner Christmas,” he said.



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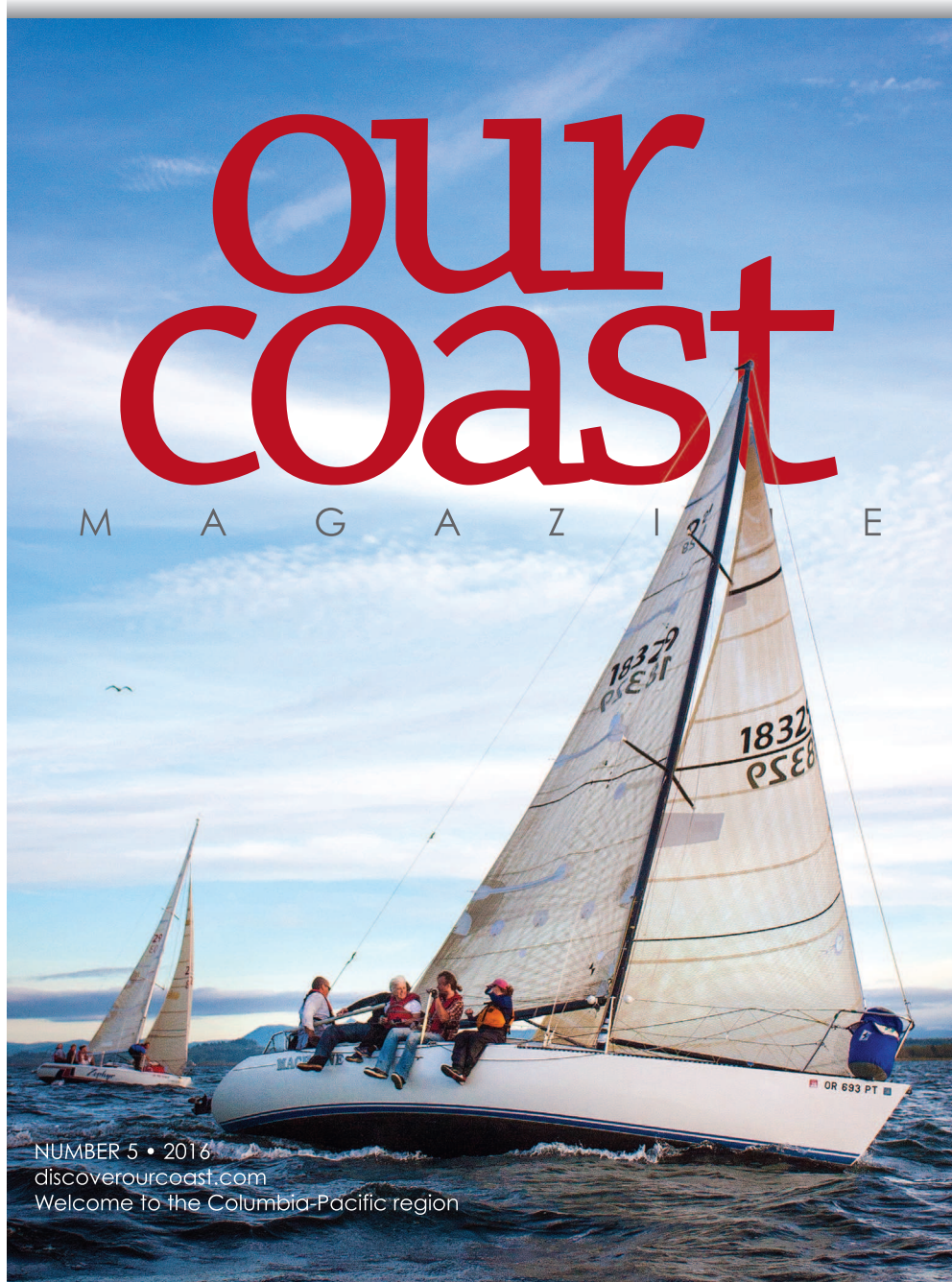
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