

Company is defying failing economy

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Getting into the right frame of mind for business makes Rite Rug a company to contend with, said Larry Noel, vice president.

Despite the dwindling economy, the company is expanding. In the last year, Rite Rug has spent more than \$1 million renovating all its stores, including the Lancaster branch that opened on U.S. 33 on Dec. 1. "With the economy down, we could either sit back and say things are bad or do something about it, so we decided to renovate," Noel said. "It's paying off too and making things brighter and better."

The local branch was built from the ground up in 120 days. By Dec. 11, 2001, the business had already surpassed sales figures from December 2000.

"We've already in the month of January surpassed last year's figures, more than doubling our sales which says a lot about the people here in Lancaster," Noel said. "They want and deserve quality."

Having two phenomenal months in the dead of winter is a very good barometer for the company, Noel said.

"We've had a lot of cus-

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tomers come in and say that it was about time, because now they're more involved in the selection, and we have a wide selection," he said.

The company came to Lancaster in 1991 and has been in operation for more than 67 years, with 19 stores in Ohio and Kentucky, and plans to move into West Virginia.

"When we come into a community like Lancaster we're not going to be here for two or three years but for the long haul," Noel said.

Moving from 5,000 to 10,000 square feet makes a big difference, said Noel. A typical carpet store is 4 to 5,000 square feet.

"We now have in stock items so the customer can take it home with them immediately, whereas we didn't have that room before," Noel said.

Noel said the new structure is a first of many, a model showroom. With total floor coverings, new se-



ABOVE: RITE Rug manager Doug Hockman (right) and sales associate Laura Glascock stand in the showroom of the new location on U.S. 33 in Lancaster.

RIGHT: BETH Livesay shows her new family room carpet she won in her family's Lancaster home. (E-G photos by William P. Cannon)

lections from leading manufacturers, trendier unique styles, and more, the showroom carries five times more inventory than what they had at the Memorial Drive location.

Bringing new ideas into the customer's home for the first year, at no additional charge, to take care of the carpet," Noel said. "We know that once you see how well it holds up, you will continue to take good care of it. Carpets don't wear out, they just ugly out, but we're willing

to make the investment to help you maintain your carpet."

After one year, the customer is given the opportunity to extend labor.

Giving the customer the best of carpet, pushes Rite Rug employees to stay at the top of their game.

"We put our people through a tremendous amount of training, it's important," Noel said. Customers may know what they want but we want to sell them what they need."

Asking a lot of questions about the customer's home allows the best possible choices. Choosing carpet isn't as easy as people may think said Erin Appleman,



advertising director for Rite Rug.

"You have to find what fits into their lifestyle," Appleman said.

Recently the store sponsored a grand opening contest — a home full of new carpet.

Winning the carpet came right on time for Beth Livesay and Bill Lang of

Lancaster who are updating their home, starting with the basement.

Their prize package includes 1,500 square feet or up to \$5,000 in carpet.

Initially they went into the store to look around.

"We were just going to see what was on sale and

(See ECONOMY/2B)

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