



THE Daily NEWS

H. L. LIBBY CORP.
603 COMMONWEALTH DR.
WARRENDALE, PA 15086

MOSTLY CLOUDY/MILD

SATURDAY, JANUARY 3, 2004

VOL. 83 — No. 262

Peebles exceeds expectations

Management says coming to Huntingdon was a good move

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Retailers normally don't like to say how business is going until a new store has been open at least a full year. However, Stephen Hannah, vice president of sales promotions for Peebles Department Stores was willing Friday to report on the chain's new location in Huntingdon.

"We are very pleased," said Hannah, "We have exceeded expectations."

Peebles opened the location Thursday, Nov. 20, in a portion of the former Ames store in the Huntingdon Plaza in Smithfield Township. Two other locations in central Pennsylvania were opened that same day.

Throngs jammed the store on opening day, and Hannah said business since then, through "Black Friday" and into the pre-and-post Christmas shopping days, has been more than even the company's highest hopes.

"We felt Huntingdon would be a good location or we would not have gone in there in the first place," Hannah said in a telephone inter-

view from his company headquarters office in South Hill, Va. "In just this short period of time we have learned it is a very good market for us. We are very pleased with the reception we have received and we expect to learn more about our customers as time goes on."

Peebles became part of Texas-based Stag Stores Inc., a publicly traded company in November. Stag is not expected to release December sales figures until at least next week.

While Peebles opened in the shopping plaza, another anchor closed in December. As had been announced earlier, financially troubled Penn Traffic Company shuttered its Bi-Lo location in the Huntingdon Plaza.

The Huntingdon closing was one of a number announced by the company which went into bankruptcy in May, the second time in the past four years.

Friday, Penn Traffic announced losses for November of \$5.7 million.

Efforts to contact a representative of the H.L. Libby Corporation by *The Daily News* Friday to seek information on a possible replacement for Bi-Lo, were unsuccessful. Libby is the owner of the Huntingdon Plaza.



Photo by Doug Roles

Alyce Wright, Hershey, stopped by the Peebles Department Store in the Huntingdon Plaza Friday to make a purchase at the fragrance counter. The Lock Haven University student was in the area "to visit family." While the store only opened in late November, a company official says sales have exceeded expectations.