



AMY'S HALLMARK SHOP

DAWN DERENALE

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BY: DANIEL R. AUSTIN

Disneyland likes to market itself as the happiest place on earth. If that's true, then Amy's Hallmark Shop in the Vacaville Commons may be a close second. Most of that is attributable to Store Manager Dawn Derenale and the 10 employees she has hired to staff the store. The camaraderie is immediately apparent when you walk into the boutique as the staff freely shares laughter and compliments with each other behind the counter and on the floor. "We're really close," Derenale said. "We're just a good group of women."

That warmth is directly passed onto customers when they walk through the door. Derenale says it's important that patrons feel like they are family, even if it's their first time in the store. "Customers don't have to stop at our store, so while they are in here, we want to listen to their story. Sometimes it may just be for a card, but that might mean they need sympathy."

Part of the magic also comes from Derenale's décor. An accomplished interior designer, she takes joy in packaging her store around the season and new merchandise. Pop in for a visit and you may find yourself wandering the displays lost in the delights of Fairy Messengers or



Dawn Derenale, Store Manager
Amy's Hallmark Shop

Toymaker Santa's showcased on shelves. "I put a lot of passion into the look of the store. I spend a lot of time here and I never want the look to get stale," Derenale said. Her talent isn't lost on Derenale's employees. "She's a great manager all around," said Jackie Fagerstrom, "but she's very artistic. She really sets the store up well."

And it's not a stretch to say it's always Christmas in Amy's Hallmark Shop. So much so, that the store literally sponsors Christmas in July, repackaging the displays for two weeks with Christmas merchandise. "It's really weird seeing ornaments when it's 110 out," Derenale said. "But I love it. I even love the grumpy people who come in and say, 'oh gosh, you have Christmas already.'"

Derenale says the stress amplifies for both Christmas in July and the traditional Christmas season. In addition to the floor displays, she says she keeps nearly 260 boxes of back stock in the store-room to fulfill demand. Hallmark Dream Books come out each April 14, keepsake books complete with wish lists that customers can submit so that their Christmas order will be ready for pick-up. Amy's Hallmark Shop also sponsors a Keepsake Ornament Club, known as KOC, with monthly dues that works sort of like a wine club

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where members pick up new selections each year in a custom designed box.

That's not to say the Hallmark shop is exclusively a Christmas store. Derenale says they participated in the Vacaville Bridal Show held at the Vacaville Opera House this year, showcasing items such as picture frames and guest books, and that she considers her store to be a little boutique with unusual offerings. "You're not going to find your average pillows and bedding here. You're going to find thoughtful gift giving items here," she said.

Derenale was born and raised in Vacaville, attending Elmira Elementary, Vaca Pena Middle School and Vacaville High where she was a member of 4H and FFA. She says that both she and the store are intimately connected to the local community. "Vacaville is a big city that is small and cozy. I love raising kids here, and I love how the Vacaville Commons holds events that invite families to the center."

If you're looking for a card, unusual gift item, or a holiday keepsake, stop by Amy's Hallmark Shop in the Vacaville Commons. You'll be happy you did.

2050 Harbison Drive, Vacaville, CA 95687
707-446-9055 | www.Hallmark.com

Mountains or beach?

Beach. I love the sound of the waves.

Flip flops or heels.

Definitely heels. I love getting dressed up and going to dinner.

Who wins a fight, Batman or Superman?

Batman. Because he's Batman!

If I opened your fridge, what would I find?

Cottage cheese and yogurt.

What's your best dish?

Lasagna. Grandma's recipe.

What's on your playlist?

I normally like to talk.

Who is your personal hero?

I would say my mom and dad.

Advice for a new entrepreneur?

Follow your dreams and your heart. They will lead you to the right place.

Q+a