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Shoppers ready for Black Friday

Tom and Joe Ainsworth will take advantage of the early morning doorbuster sales on the day after Thanksgiving, deemed the biggest shopping day of the year.

But the Air Force retiree and son Joe were already scoping out the flat-screen TVs on display at Hinesville's Wal-Mart Supercenter on Wednesday afternoon, anticipating the prices to drop by Black Friday.

They were strictly looking for bargains, comparing the prices of a 40-inch set with what they have seen at Best Buy, the Post Exchange on Fort Stewart and online.

"I don't really need one (TV)," Joe Ainsworth said. "But I noticed the other day the prices have dropped from last year, considerably."

Cody DeForeest, 27, has his sights set on discounted DVDs and the new Nintendo DS but wants to shop smart.

"It's one of those things, if you don't look you'll catch an apple instead of an orange," DeForeest said.

John Howard Brown, interim director of the school of economic development at Georgia Southern University, supported taking advantage of slashed prices but thinks the majority of consumers will scale back on holiday gifts this year.

"What I suspect is the emphasis this Christmas will switch to practical gifts," Brown said.

Wal-Mart, possibly the area's largest retailer, will promote prices during its main sale from 5-11 a.m. Friday, according to store manager Warren Wohlgemuth.

"I think people are still going to Christmas shop," Wohlgemuth said. "Certainly the economy is not good right now and people are looking to save money, and that's what Wal-Mart does — help people save money."

The store, which will be open Thanksgiving, will have maps available for consumers and introduce an assortment of items not sold last year.

The Goody's department store in Hinesville will be open Thanksgiving Day from 9 a.m.-4 p.m., and will re-open at 4 a.m. Friday, according to store manager Patricia Smith.

A store in the same shopping plaza, Big Lots, will open at 6 a.m. Friday, with special deals on toys, furniture and DVD recorders, according to manager Bob Guyer.

He thinks the day will pan out well for budget-conscious consumers.

"We're probably planning for it to be about even with last year," Guyer said.

Twila Clark, manager of Hinesville's Peebles department store that opened last November, hopes for the same. Her store's specials start at 7 a.m. Friday and include coats and tennis shoes.

"Generally, the day after Thanksgiving we expect to do very, very well," Clark said.

Brown said Black Friday got its name because it is typically the time when retailers move into the black for the current year.

"Everything that they will have earned in terms of revenue prior (to this time) just covers their cost of doing business," Brown said. "So this is where they make their profits."

"Historically, it used to be that 40 percent of retail sales happen between Thanksgiving and Christmas," he added.

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