



County officials, Chamber Board of Directors, ambassadors, family and friends all gathered at a Ribbon Cutting ceremony held Thursday, June 7th, to celebrate the relocation of the local business, Close to Our Hearts Country Store.

Close to Our Hearts Country Store first opened its doors in the Village shopping center in 2004 and is owned by Ronda Stuart and her mom, Jackie Hopkins.

“Ronda actually taught dance in the location behind the Village Drug. Her dad, Jerry Hopkins who was a retired coach, began making crosses. People started buying the crosses. Ronda began traveling to market and purchasing additional merchandise, and from there she went from teaching dancing to operating a retail store, or Close to Our Hearts Country Store,” said Jeffery Stuart.

“When this location became available, we just felt the downtown appeal and traffic would help to keep the business moving forward.

The building has an interesting history. It is the second oldest building in Ozona, built in 1898 by L.B. Cox and operated as a grocery store until 1978. My granddad, a rock mason, came to Ozona with nine kids in a wagon in 1894. He worked in a nearby rock quarry. The stone on the front of this building and the courthouse came from that same quarry.”

“We appreciate all of the support from the people who helped us to make the move and the Chamber for promoting our celebration,” said Ronda Stuart.

Employees of Close to Our Hearts Country Store are Elsa Vasquez, Tina Castillo, Hilda Carrasco and Lucy Vasquez Tejerina.

Close to Our Hearts Country Store features Jon Hart Designs, Fiestaware, handmade crosses, Circle E and Mud House candles, gifts, accessories, a bridal registry, home décor, Southern Couture t-shirts, Visible Faith God Tags, jewelry, enamel coated and Colorlodge cooking line, a new handmade jewelry line called Tagua from Ecuador, Lazy One line for adults and children, Jelly Cat children’s books and animal companion, and much more.

There are a number of artists, (Bruce Kerbow, E.A. Wadsworth, Smith Neal, and Ismael Villarreal) whose crafts, such as hand-made iron crosses, soaps, bags and paintings are also sold on consignment at the store.

Close to Our Hearts Country Store is now located on the town square at 916 Avenue E, and open Tuesday through Friday from 10 a.m. to 6:00 p.m., Saturday from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. and closed on Sundays.

For more information you may call the store at 325/392-2700, or e-mail:

jeffandronda@verizon.net.