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■ THURSDAY PORTRAIT

Laird finds creative outlet in design

By MICHELLE JONES
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After spending a number of years at home with her two daughters before the youngest was school age, Deidra Laird had had enough.

"I knew that I had to do something or I'd go crazy," Laird said.

In June it will be just two years since she opened her own interior design business in Opp which gives her the outlet for creativity she said she needed.

A natural at design and decoration, Laird said her job can be very challenging, "and I'm always up for a challenge."

Trying to reflect the tastes of her clients is a concern because it can be tempting for a designer to incorporate her own tastes into the work.

"There's always going to be
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Star-News photo by Michelle Jones

Deidra Laird enjoys making houses into homes.

Laird

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people who are hard to please, but it's real important to that [what is selected] represents them and not you and to make them happy," she said.

The biggest headache, Laird said, is the paperwork required for running a business, but she handles all of it herself.

"I'd love to be able to just go into a home and say this is what we need to do. I don't like having to call a company when an order is messed up, or having to make sure the sales tax is reported on time. I don't enjoy those things, but that's part of it," she said.

Laird said she understands that building a business requires a lot of hard work.

During a typical week, Laird will make several trips to the homes or offices of clients, travels to several shops for fabrics and such, and then spends the remaining three days of the week in the shop.

Cathy Morris, a friend of Laird's, works in the shop when Laird is out and about.

The decision to go into business for herself was greeted enthusiastically by her husband Wesley, an Opp attorney, who Deidra said really encouraged her to get out and do her own thing.

"He knew that I needed something. He encouraged me to pursue what I really liked. He felt like I had a talent for it," she said.

Deidra and Wesley have two children, Laken, 11 and Leah, 8. She is originally from a small town near Tuscaloosa, called Buhl, about 15 minutes from Northport. She is a graduate of the University of Alabama where she earned a bachelor's degree in nursing.

Her shop carries a variety of decorating styles, from brightly colored glassware, to black and white photographs to leopard-print pillows and rugs.

The perks of her new business are the pats on the back from clients, their referrals to friends and the opportunity to take a raw palette and turn it into a showpiece.

"The best part of it is when I get the chance to try new things, like using daring, bright colors or wall treatments, or to paint designs onto hardwood floors. When you put up drapes and see the client's reaction it is very rewarding," she said.

Her eye for design was not passed on by her mother, nor did she attend any design school. Her abilities are a "knack," she said.

"I pride myself in being a stylish person. You would not believe all

the magazines I subscribe to just to keep up with all of that. I love talking to other people in the design world. You get a lot of ideas from other people. But the knack has to be there first," Laird said.