

**Dow Jones**

Industrial Average

8,663.50

**S&P**

500 Index

916.07



-7.49



-1.73

# BUSINESS

**Nasdaq**

Composite Index

1,314.85

**Gold**

New York Merc.

\$312.40



-20.92



-\$4.50

**INSIDE:** For Mutual listings and stocks see page 2C

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# Off-price retailer moving to Sumter

By SHARYN LUCAS-PARKER

Item Senior Staff Writer

Rugged Wearhouse, a West Virginia-based off-price retailer, is coming to Sumter.

It will occupy the 12,000-square-foot space at Wesmark Plaza that was left vacant earlier this month when Fields Home Fashion Center closed.

Rugged Wearhouse offers recognized brand-name clothing, shoes and accessories for men, women and children as well as home furnishings and other merchandise that is sold for as much as 70 percent below department store prices.

"The customer acceptance of our merchandise is phenomenal," said Jim Wassong, Rugged Wearhouse's director of stores.

"We are in the fashion business," he added. "If a certain item is important to the customer and the major chains in the mall are going to carry it, there's

a good chance you will find a selection of it in our stores, but at a good price."

The retailer had its grand opening for its 39th store Friday. That store, located in Harbison Court Shopping Center in Columbia, is the first to locate in South Carolina. The other stores are in North Carolina, Virginia, Maryland and Delaware.

"We are truly fortunate to bring them to Sumter," said Barry Nicholson, a representative with Libby Wesmark Enterprises LLC, which owns Wesmark Plaza. "There isn't anything like it in Sumter, and the stores have performed extremely well throughout the Southeast. They are a very strong tenant and accepted very well by customers."

Wesmark Plaza is being remodeled and construction for Rugged Wearhouse will begin immediately, Nicholson said.

The Sumter store is expected to open by the end of October — in time for the Christmas shopping sea-

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**BARRY NICHOLSON**

*Libby Wesmark Enterprises LLC representative*

son, Wassong said.

"We're excited about being there, and we can't wait for all the nice people in town to come and see us," he said. "Once they shop us, they are going to be regulars because we do have the best prices and our merchandise is delivered fresh to our stores on Tuesdays and Thursdays. We buy the right goods at the right price."

Libby Wesmark Enterprises bought the 216,000-square-foot Wesmark Plaza a year ago with hopes of bringing "it back to life as a primary shopping cen-

ter," Nicholson said.

"Its location is excellent. Its access is excellent. Its tenant mix is excellent," Nicholson said.

Wesmark Plaza is an ideal location for retailers wanting to take advantage of Sumter's main corridors — Broad Street Extension, U.S. 76/378 and U.S. 521, but until now, there has been little commercial development there. The shopping center recently picked up two other tenants — Plej's and Big Lot's, and company officials are talking with other prospective retailers they believe would complement Goody's and Staples — the plaza's two anchor stores.

In addition to Fields, Newman's Furniture Mart is liquidating and closing its 50,000-square-foot building.

Nicholson said the goal is to be 100 percent leased.

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