



Jacqueline Marque ♦ Daily News staff

Melissa Underwood, left, and Laura Flynn, owner of Laura Jean in Newport, stock the shelves Wednesday, one day before the store's grand opening party.



Megan Rathfon ♦ Daily News staff

Caps, belts and jeans sit on display at Laura Jean.

Customers shop for the perfect fit at Laura Jean specialty store



Megan Rathfon ♦ Daily News staff

Laura Flynn gets ready to open Laura Jean on William Street.

Hip pocket

By Courtney Anderson
Daily News staff

NEWPORT — It all started when Laura Flynn of Newport took a trip down to Florida in April. Looking to buy a pair of jeans, she said it took her a day and a half to find the perfect ones — not because the area stores lacked choices, but because there were so many different styles to choose from.

“There were a day and a half worth of places to go,” Flynn said.

And that's when it occurred to her that aside from the one or two styles that a few small stores carry in and around Newport, there was not much of what could be considered a selection of jeans for either women or men on Aquidneck Island.

“Every time I went to buy jeans, I would have to leave the island,” she said.

Building off of the need that she saw for high-end denim and her experience as a former fashion-merchandising student, Flynn opened Laura Jean at 94 William St., (formerly Charlie's Five and Dime), in mid-July.

Originally thinking that she would go with a New York City-street theme for the store's décor, complete with graffiti on the walls, Flynn instead opted for a subtler Western style.

The design is somewhat homage to the origin



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Danielle Tooman models a pair of Antik denim jeans Thursday at the Laura Jean grand opening party.

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of blue jeans, when they were first worn by cowboys on the open range, according to Laura Jean buyer Melissa Pattavina.

Bare wood planks held up by thick frayed rope act as shelves for the 30 varieties of women's jeans and 19 styles available for men against the backdrop of rust-red walls. Saloon-style swinging doors conceal the dressing rooms. Hanging along the walls are lacey tanks and cashmere sweaters and tattoo-decorated tees. Cowboy boots, flip-flops and big buckle belts are displayed throughout the store.

The brands that Flynn sells are a far cry from the standard Levi's; in fact most of them are names that the average person has never heard of, such as Chip and Pepper, Ed Hardy, Kasil, True Religion and Citizens of Humanity.

"I look for something that people just can't get around here," Pattavina said. "It's more fun to get people to learn about what's new."

The prices may be somewhat higher than some may be accustomed to paying, ranging from \$127 to \$300, with the average falling around \$170, but Flynn and Pattavina said that the uniqueness and high quality of all of the jeans make the prices well worth it, especially during a time when jeans are just as acceptable at the grocery store as they are paired with a sparkly top on a big night out on the town.



'We help everyone that comes in.'

LAURA FLYNN

owner, Laura Jean

Jeans and T-shirts are displayed for sale at the new Laura Jean store at 94 William St., Newport.

Megan Rathfon
◆ Daily News staff

"All of our jeans are made in America, which jacks the price up to begin with," Flynn said.

In addition, each pair is one of a kind, according to Pattavina.

"People do the handiwork on the jeans so they're not processing cookie-cutter jeans," Pattavina said.

Other features, such as particularly soft fabric, pocket decorations and placement to flatter the wearer's backside, only add to the quality of each pair, according to Pattavina and Flynn.

With such a wide selection combined with the constant challenge, particularly among women, to find that perfect pair

of jeans, Flynn said that customers are often overwhelmed when they first come into her store.

However, she said that she is able to give each customer individual attention to find the pair that they are happy with.

"We help everyone that comes in. Since this is a destination shop, not right down on Thames Street, we have the luxury and time to do that," Flynn said.

Judging by customers' reaction so far, Flynn wasn't the only one on the island who had difficulty finding jeans.

"They love it. They say 'Finally. We needed this.'"