



Ciara Watt, right, shops for jewelry with help from Cindy Clay. The shop offers selections from several designers.





The distinctive Keeneland Shop lawn jockey invites customers inside. Keeneland-inspired Christmas ornaments are popular holiday gifts.

# Post Time

## AT THE KEENELAND SHOP

By Robin Roenker | Photos by Kirk Schlea

New product lines celebrate Keeneland's history, heritage, and role in Bluegrass culture

**VISITORS WHO STEP THROUGH THE STATELY GREEN DOORS** of The Keeneland Shop are greeted by friendly staff and shelves of unique, high-quality giftable goods and apparel that speak to Keeneland's legacy of tradition, quality, and — of course — love of horses.

From belts, hats, and bow ties emblazoned with Keeneland's iconic horse and jockey logo to handmade equestrian jewelry, custom handbags, and locally produced stoneware and candle lines crafted exclusively for Keeneland, the shop offers an ever-changing array of merchandise — at an array of price points — making The Keeneland Shop an ideal spot for holiday shopping or year-round gift-giving.

As the holidays approach, many customers come to The Keeneland Shop looking for a one-of-a-kind gift for that hard-to-buy-for relative, or to pick up heirloom-quality apparel for a special loved one with particularly discerning taste.

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Out-of-the-ordinary items include bird-feather bow ties by Brackish.

Director of Retail Kyle Cassin and his team work hard to make sure customers find what they're looking for — or discover something new that they can't pass up — when they shop at The Keeneland Shop, which also has a second retail location at The Lexus Store of Lexington on East New Circle Road. "It's a bit of a balancing act," Cassin said. "We want to make sure that we have an array of products and price points represented, but we also want our customers to understand the premium value in what we are selling. Keeneland is a premium experience and our products represent that, but we also view Keeneland as a place for everyone, and with our assortment we aim to offer something for all of our patrons year-round."

## Celebrating pageantry

Since joining Keeneland as director of retail in September 2015, Cassin and his team have worked to re-envision The Keeneland Shop and its online store, [keenelandshop.com](http://keenelandshop.com) — which relaunched with an all-new look in August — to emphasize the pageantry of the races and embrace collaborations with many Lexington and Kentucky-based product lines.

The shop carries, for example, leather and metal equestrian-themed bracelets created by Lexington jewelry maker Lindsay Combs, owner of Lela Ray Jewelry. This fall it launched a custom line of children's clothing by The Beaufort Bonnet Company,



Director of Retail Kyle Cassin is enhancing the shop's traditions.

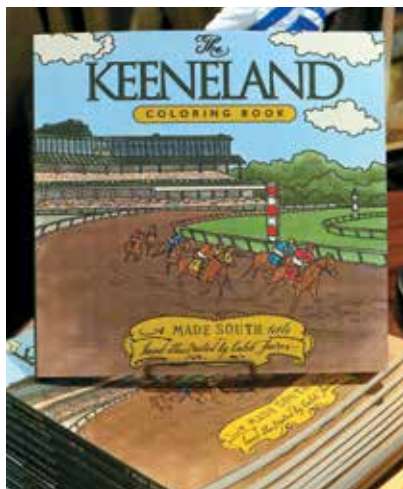
based in Lexington, and a Keeneland line of handbags by Henry Dry Goods, also headquartered in Lexington.

Adding to the local product bounty, several varieties of Gents Original Cocktail Mix, made in Lexington by husband-and-wife team Tim and Jessica Jones, sit in the shop alongside two lines of custom candles created in Lexington exclusively for Keeneland by The Julep Candle Co. and Wixology, both locally run brands.

The shop also offers several other brands made in Kentucky, including two Thoroughbred racing-themed lines of Louisville Stoneware — featuring an embossed horse motif and hand-painted jockey images — and a new custom green Keeneland blazer by Crittenden Rawlings, based in Midway, which was introduced this year.

Surveying the new, enhanced "Kentucky-ness" of The Keeneland Shop makes it clear that Cassin's vision for the shop starts with an understanding of the deep love his patrons have for Keeneland, for Lexington, and for the state as a whole.

"I've been amazed by the community's



The Keeneland Coloring Book offers a fun history lesson.





The custom line of Henry Dry Goods handbags and other items is proving popular.

investment in Keeneland,” says Cassin, a Chicago native and former golf event merchandiser for PGA of America who lived in West Palm Beach, Florida, before moving to Kentucky. “People really identify with this property and this historic brand, and so we’ve tried to develop a unique offering that showcases Keeneland even more.”

### Building connections

Before his arrival the shop tended to focus on sales of a few Keeneland logo items, from coffee cups and key chains to

T-shirts and hats. And while those items are still popular and available, Cassin’s goal is also to take the shop’s offerings in new and more subtly branded directions.

“Not everything in our shop will have the official Keeneland logo. There are other ways to integrate the Keeneland heritage and tradition into our products,” he said. The shop’s messaging is evident in its array of products with horse-related imagery, from custom equestrian jewelry by Darren K. Moore to blankets and women’s wraps featuring horse bit motifs and more.

One hugely successful example of an offering unique to The Keeneland Shop is the shop’s new custom line of Henry Dry Goods handbags, clutches, duffel bags, and drink koozies, all designed in Lexington by owner Sherri Henry Wolf. The canvas bags offer an array of print motifs, including watercolor inspired drawings of a horse and jockey silks. One bag even features a printed history of Keeneland on its inner lining — the first of Henry Wolf’s products to feature such location-specific text.



The wooden Keeneland Horseracing board game appeals to children and adults alike.



The limited-edition Keeneland blazer has been a hit.



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The Keeneland line of The Beaufort Bonnet Company clothing launched this fall.

"I'm big on telling a story and on my products being more than just a bag," said Henry Wolf, a lifelong Lexingtonian. "With everything being so stamped out these days, I want to produce a product that people can feel good about and that has a little bit of meaning. The connection with The Keeneland Shop has been a fabulous fit," she said.

Already, plans are in the works for a new custom Keeneland line of Henry Dry Goods products for the spring that will "take the artistry of the hand-drawn and hand-sketched look even further," she added.

The Keeneland Shop's collaboration with The Beaufort Bonnet Company,

based in Lexington under the direction of owner/designer Markey Hutchinson, has been another huge hit with customers. Launched this fall, the Keeneland line of Beaufort Bonnet children's clothing includes an exclusive, long-sleeved blue dress, a short-sleeved pink dress, and boy's blue romper — known as a Jon Jon — all boasting custom, Keeneland-inspired smocking with images of jockey silks and a horseshoe.

The chance to collaborate with The Keeneland Shop was personally rewarding for Hutchinson, who is a relative of horseman Jack Keene, original owner of the land on which the track was built. But as thrilled as she was to create her brand's first custom line, she imagined



Keeneland-themed embroidered pillows will brighten any room.

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Gifts for the holidays or other occasions range from Gents Julep Mix and racing-themed Louisville Stoneware to Darren K. Moore jewelry.

that the items' appeal would be limited to local buyers. To her surprise, that has not been the case.

"I originally thought the designs would appeal primarily to those in the local region who planned to have their children wear the clothes to Keeneland races this fall," said Hutchinson. "But when we posted the Keeneland items to our Instagram site, which has around 85,000 followers worldwide, people were calling and emailing from everywhere asking, 'Where can I get those?' And we've pointed them to The Keeneland Shop and Keeneland Shop online, which are the only places they're available."

That success story is one Cassin plans to continue, with additional product lines and new company collaborations constantly in development.

"One of our goals has really been to create Keeneland-specific items that offer customers a way to display their love of Keeneland throughout the year," he said. "Finding the right local artisans to partner with has been a great way to tie us further to the community. Our goal is to make visiting The Keeneland Shop an essential part of the Lexington experience all year."

## Gifts ready for giving

For holiday gift-giving, the shop offers everything from custom Keeneland hol-

iday ornaments to etched barware sets to a line of handmade, bird-feather bow ties created by a South Carolina company called Brackish. In the spring the shop will launch a Keeneland-exclusive Brackish tie, which Cassin is particularly excited about. "They are beautiful ties. We started carrying them last spring, and they've really developed a following," Cassin said.

Candle Co.'s White Sycamore candle — a nod to the paddock area's beloved, nearly 100-year-old white sycamore, and a new line of puzzles featuring images by unofficial Keeneland artist-in-residence Peter Williams.

For the youngest Keeneland fans, or for those simply young at heart, the shop's new Keeneland Coloring Book offers history and anecdotes about the track as well

## THE KEENELAND SHOP

Shop Monday–Saturday 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. at Keeneland,  
or Monday–Saturday 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. at The Lexus Store of Lexington,  
1264 East New Circle Road, or online anytime at [keenelandshop.com](http://keenelandshop.com).

The shop's limited-edition custom, light-green herringbone Keeneland blazer, created by Crittenden Rawlings, has been another popular seller, thanks to its year-round appeal. "It's very classy. We wanted something that could be worn in both spring and fall, which was not very loud but not boring either," said Cassin. A new iteration of the custom Crittenden blazer is already being developed.

For the home, the shop offers an array of items for Keeneland aficionados, from its popular Catstudio line of Keeneland-themed embroidered pillows and tea towels, to the Keeneland-inspired Julep

as iconic scenes from the grounds, ready to be brought to life with a few markers or crayons. And the new wooden Keeneland Horseracing board game is sure to liven up family together-time around the holidays.

For the staff at The Keeneland Shop, helping customers find the perfect gift is one of the best parts of the job. "We have so many things that you can't find other places," said Cindy Clay, a retired middle school English teacher from Jessamine County who has worked in the shop for three years. "The people who work here all take pride in working at such a special place." **KM**