Offering a fun environment and helping people out in a rough economy is the purpose behind the new second-hand consignment store Second Thoughts, located inside J's Home Furnishings.

The new business is the brainchild of Barb Kreider and her daughter Summer Maloney, a guidance counselor at Holyoke JR/SR High School.

Second Thoughts hopes to open its doors on Monday, Feb. 2. Hours of operation will be Monday-Friday, 10 a.m.-5:30 p.m. and Saturday, 8 a.m.-12 noon.

The store will offer clothing for men, women (including maternity), infants and children, as well as shoes, purses, jewelry, scarves, belts and decorative household items.

Though they do not open until Feb. 2, Kreider and Maloney are currently taking in items for merchandise. Those wanting to bring in items before the store opens can contact Kreider at 466-3401 or 466-2309.

Kreider said the idea of opening a consignment store "evolved a little faster than we originally planned." She and Summer have always enjoyed shopping at consignment stores in other areas like Fort Collins in the past, and thought perhaps one could do well in Holyoke.

However, she did not start to think seriously about it until the space on the south side of J's Home Furnishings became available.

"After 18 years of running a lawn care business, I was ready for a change," said Kreider, "and with the economy the way it is, it seemed like a good time to do this."

She added she is very grateful to Jackie and Toby Thompson, who encouraged her idea for the store and worked hard to clear their inventory and get the space ready for the new business.

Though it's happening sooner than she expected, Kreider and Maloney are not approaching their endeavor blindly. They have talked with many other owners of consignment stores to find out how they run their businesses.

Once the store is open, those who would like to bring in merchandise can come into the store to have the items inspected and priced. Each consignor will then have to sign an agreement detailing the terms of the 90-day consignment period.

The agreement states the store will keep the articles for 90 days. If an item does not sell within the first 30 days, the store will drop the price 20 percent. If it does not sell after another 30 days, another 20 percent will be taken off the price.

At 90 days, the consignor will have the option to take back the item or to donate it to the store. If there is no response within three days of being notified by the store, the items automatically become the property of Second Thoughts.

Consignors can collect the money they have made on the first day of the month, or at the end of the 90-day consignment period.

To improve the chances an article of clothing will be sold, Kreider and Maloney ask that people select in-style clothing to bring in. They also ask that the clothing be in good condition, cleaned, pressed and on hangers if possible.

They understand there will sometimes be questions on whether certain clothing is

acceptable. If unsure, just bring the item by the store or call and ask. They will consider all items that are brought in.

Second Thoughts' "Drop and Run" system will allow people with many items, or those on the go, to drop off merchandise to be sorted through by the store. The consignor can then return later to pick up the rejected articles and/or to sign the agreement.

Items the store will not accept include undergarments, lingerie, swimwear, pajamas, hats/caps, electric items (except lamps) and kitchen appliances.

As Maloney pointed out, there are many people who have clothing or other things they would like to get rid of, but feel a garage sale would be too much work. "Now they can bring their stuff here, and still get money out of it, but we do all the work for them."

But it won't be all work and no play for the owners, who see the new business as an exciting adventure and a chance for quality mother/daughter time.

One fun activity the duo is planning within the next few months is "Prom Night." With the prom season coming up shortly, the business will be accepting prom dresses for a limited time. A special night will then be scheduled for high school girls to come in and enjoy refreshments and win door prizes as they look for a dress.

Kreider said she knows how expensive prom dresses can be, and she hopes girls can find a nice dress at a price they can afford. In fact, that's the whole idea behind every item inside Second Thoughts.

"We hope to have a store that helps everyone get what they need at low prices in this challenging economy," said Kreider.