

● BUSINESS

Limitless boutique opens downtown

Store hopes to provide space for 20-30 small entrepreneurs in Central Avenue storefront

PETER LOZINSKI
DAILY HERALD

A man who started a clothing brand designed to help people push past their comfort zone is walking the talk.

Last year Cody Demerais launched his pop-up shop, I am Limitless Gear, at Gateway Mall, selling clothing with his brand aimed at inspiring others.

Friday, he celebrated the soft opening of something a little bit more permanent — his storefront on Central Avenue. Located at 909A Central Ave. in the former spot of Beth's Yarn, Limitless Clothing and Apparel will stock Demerais' clothing brand as well as creations from other local entrepreneurs.

Demerais wanted to inspire and create something people could be proud of.

That was the thought behind I am Limitless Gear, the clothing brand the Prince Albert resident started in early 2017.

Demerais is from Prince Albert, and — aside from a year spent in Saskatoon for school — has lived the city his whole life.

He started with a T-shirt, and progressed from there, adding hoodies and hats, toques and other apparel.

Demerais thought hard about his brand name and its design, two gears interlocked, just like the infinity sign.

"I love the concept of going that extra mile, being something somewhat different, just exceeding expectations. A gear is a strong symbol. Shifting gears means making motion happen. Shift gears, be limitless, is the mantra I came up with," he told the Herald last year.

The idea of creating a brand first came to Demerais through a project in elementary school. The teacher assigned the students to come up with a personal brand using hockey sticks, basketballs or their initials, anything that connected with them.

"I always thought it was a cool concept, having your own brand," Demerais said.

"Something with your signature on it, something out there."



Cody Demerais poses in his new store during its first day of operations Friday.

PETER LOZINSKI/DAILY HERALD

Demerais wanted his brand to be inspirational.

"I want to motivate people to step outside their comfort zone, to not follow the same routine, and to do something that makes them uneasy."

Friday, at about 11:30 a.m. Demerais had already seen about 20 customers come through his door in the first hour and a half of the store's operations.

"I'm feeling fantastic," he said. "I've never been more excited about something in my life."

Demerais said last year's pop-up shop was "just a little tester" to see how the clothing brand would do in the local market.

"I was very happy with the results and the support I got last year, he said.

Now, he wants to give other local entrepreneurs a taste of that same success.

"It's going to be a retail store, (with)

about 20-30 businesses where everyone can test their products on the market and see where their business can go next."

The business is still growing, but as of opening day, Demerais has welcomed Warman's 306 Handmade Signs, Saskatoon's Viahera Canada, local microblading business Brows on Fleek, Christmas wreaths from Tanya Miller at Vintage Love and Bliss Clothing into his space.

"I'm very happy with the team that's working together to make a storefront work," he said.

"It's been a process over the past few years of working on this brand, but I can't wait to see what I can do with another six months of working on this full-time."

In addition to providing a space for other small entrepreneurs to sell their wares, Demerais is hoping to spread

the message about the importance of shopping local.

"When you support a business like mine, you help keep my dreams alive, keeping the lights on," he said.

"When you support 306 Handmade Signs, you help feed a couple of young kids. When you buy products from Bliss Clothing you help their brand new baby. When you support small business, you're helping more than you think, and I wanted to show the importance of that."

As for pushing his own limits, Demerais said opening a store like this is nothing he's ever attempted. He's also planning to launch a motivational speaking business in the new year.

"I've never run a retail store in my life, so that's a little far out from the usual," he said.

"Since I decided to pull the trigger, I haven't looked back."

● BUSINESS

Majority of shoppers admit to 'showrooming,' CFIB warning of harm to local business

DAILY HERALD STAFF

The Canadian Federation of Independent Business (CFIB) is warning the public about the effects showrooming—when shoppers browse local businesses to learn more about a particular product, but then buy it from an online giant.

A Wednesday news release said 60 per cent of experienced retailers in Canada have come across customers using the tactic, with a third saying it's had a significant impact on their business. Another poll showed that 55 per cent of Canadian customers are doing it.

"When customers go into independent stores to ask questions or try on merchandise and then take a picture or write down a model number so they can buy the item online, they're not just taking away a sale—they're taking money away from their neighbourhoods," emphasized Marilyn Braun-Pollon, CFIB's Vice-President, Western Canada & Agri-business.

"These are the shops that support local kids' hockey teams or donate to the community foodbank every Christmas."

She said local retailers want to help people in their communities find the right products, but their rent, property

taxes and employees need to be paid: "Ultimately, when consumers take up the time of local retailers but spend their money elsewhere, it's our communities that suffer."

The CNIB's public opinion survey was conducted in September in partnership with Angus Reid Global. Its National Retail Sector survey was conducted in November and based off of 1,370 small business owners from Canada.

One business owner said he had a customer ask questions about a product and then order it from a different retailer right there in the store.

Ryan Mallough, CNIB director and

lead author of the report, said showrooming may seem harmless, but it undermines the health of local communities particularly during the holiday season.

"You wouldn't sit down in a restaurant just to read the menu and get some cooking tips from the chef before heading to the grocery store," he said.

"With Black Friday and Cyber Monday kicking off the holiday shopping season, we encourage consumers to save themselves the crowds and clicks and visit their local, independent merchants. They'll thank you and pay it forward," added Braun-Pollon.