

Thanksgiving Day shopping is here to stay

BY ANNE D'INNOCENZIO
The Associated Press

NEW YORK — Thanksgiving Day shopping — a delight to some, an anathema to others — isn't going away, but some stores are rethinking their strategies on whether it makes sense to be open on the holiday itself.

Many of the nation's major mall operators and the big retailers that anchor them, such as Toys R Us, J.C. Penney, and Macy's, are sticking with what they want to be a new tradition, kicking off the holiday shopping season on Thanksgiving Day.

Others, including the Mall of America, the nation's largest shopping mall, are closing for Thanksgiving this year after being open for the past several years. Some retailers that are closing cite respect for the holiday, but in truth the cost of being open may be more than the return.

"Once you let the genie out of the bottle, it's hard," said Stephen D. Lebovitz, president and CEO of CBL & Associates Properties, a mall operator that is closing 72 of its malls for the day. "More retailers are coming to their senses and realizing it is a family holiday and from a business point of view, it's not making much business sense."

Stores being open on Thanksgiving started in earnest in 2011 and took a punch out of sales on Black Friday, which had usually launched the shopping season. Many places like Macy's,

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Target and J.C. Penney have been opening earlier and earlier on Thanksgiving as they try to outdo others to get first dibs on customers who could easily buy online. But the move has been controversial, as many workers have voiced complaints that stores are putting profits over workers' time to be with their families.

Some 89 of the 145 properties that Chattanooga, Tennessee-based CBL owns or has interest in opened at 6 p.m. on the holiday last year. While dozens of those will be closed this year, the department stores, movie theaters, restaurants and retailers with exterior entrances have the option to open on Thanksgiving. Other retailers including Office Depot and consumer electronics chain hhgregg Inc. plan to be closed after being open for the past several years.

Plenty of retailers, particularly high-end stores like Nordstrom or those like T.J. Maxx that offer discounts every day, never opened on Thanksgiving and have collected goodwill be-

See SHOPPING, PAGE 7

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