

Piedmont native brings home California style

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Rainie Wells, a native of Piedmont now living in San Francisco, hopes her business Look At Me Now will bring some California flavor to West Virginia. For more photos, see page 5A.

Tribune photo by Allison Churchill

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Rainie Wells, a native of Piedmont and 1980 graduate of Keyser High School, recently returned from San Francisco to host a "Hat Extravaganza" on the second floor of the Piedmont Fire Hall.

Wells displayed the clothes and accessories available through her personal shopping business, Look At Me Now.

The business was started to help the women of Wells' church family, the First Church of God in Christ, in Piedmont, have stylish clothes for their travels to church functions.

"I would come home and hear people were driving to Pittsburgh or Hagerstown to buy nice clothes," Wells said. "They shouldn't have to do that."

Currently, customers can call Wells with a request,

such as a black outfit with gold on it, and she will travel to the Los Angeles fashion district to find something like it, and buy it wholesale. To have this privilege, Wells had to acquire a business license.

"Some of these hats would sell in Nordstrom's for about \$250, and I can get them for \$90. Who would you turn to?" Wells asked. Once she has a requested item, it's packed and on its way to West Virginia.

Wells said she left for San Francisco in 1985 (on Valentine's Day, in a blizzard, she remembers) with her two children, Tanosha, now 24, and Tyrone, 22, in search of "something better." (She now has a third child, Allante, who is 10-years-old.)

Now she hopes her business, which is for now a personal shopping service, will lead to "something better" in Piedmont.

"I'd like to come back and

open a boutique," Wells said, and is hoping to help turn Piedmont around in the process.

"I remember Piedmont used to have a decent downtown; there was Dent Davis' bakery, which had the absolute best cream filled donuts and rotisserie chicken, Ms. O'Brien's Lad'n Lassie, Cut Rate, The Style Shop," she said. "We used to have Christmas parades, festivals. But that's all gone, in the past."

Wells said she used the show to see if there was a market for her service in Piedmont. An audience of 50 and over \$1,500 in merchandise sold in an hour proved there is. She will further test the water when she returns in July as a vendor at the Second Back Street Reunion.

"This vision I have for Look At Me Now is massive," she said. "What I have to offer, people will travel to Piedmont to get it."