Written by By Rick Abasta For the Sun
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Models for the Thunderbird Supply Company signed calendars and posters at the company’s flagship operation in Gallup on Dec. 2. The meet and greet was part of an effort to get Christmas shoppers into the store.

Founded in 1971, Thunderbird has been steadily supplying individual crafts people and manufacturers with raw materials to make the beautiful southwestern style jewelry that dominates the area.

General manager Danny Thomason has been with the company since 1978.

Thomason joked about his long association with Thunderbird.

“I guess I’m part of the original furniture,” he said.

Through the years, Thomason has seen the operation bloom into the thriving jewelry supply company it is today, with additional operations in Albuquerque and Flagstaff. Online mail order services are also available for those who reside outside the area.

“We sell the fabricated silver, the stones, the tools, the findings and all the items that go into making southwestern style jewelry,” Thomason said.

The decision to use beautiful Navajo models to showcase the jewelry that has made the store a success over the years was a no-brainer.

“Originally, we started working with the Women of the Navajo Calendar about 10 years ago. We sponsored them and did what we’re doing today, which is a meet and greet,” Thomason said.

The company decided to begin their own model search and publish a calendar after the Women of the Navajo Calendar decided not to publish one year.

The result was the new calendar for Thunderbird Supply Company, which features six models. The models were promoted at all store locations and in area magazines and newspapers.

“We found out that we could do more with the models as far as promoting them,” Thomas said.

On Dec. 2, customers patiently stood in line for the chance to meet the calendar models and take advantage of the photo opportunity.

A live remote broadcast added to the excitement as people lined up to meet the 2018 models: Fallyn B., Melania S., Rita-Marie B., Sesha HC., Shicura B., and Yvette P.

Thomason said Thunderbird Supply has anywhere from 15-20 renowned artists from the community who frequent the store on a daily basis.

“Their work blows me away every time. I’m always willing to take a chance when it comes to working with natives because of their ability to contribute to the community,” Thomason said. “We took a gamble [with the calendar] and it definitely paid off.”

For more information, visit www.thunderbirdsupply.com .

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