brides to contact him as soon as they book the church or hall for their wedding so he can hold the date.

"Our weekends fill up quickly, and, depending on the size of the wedding and the details, we do as many as five or six weddings per weekend," explained Sibley. "I try to never say no (to booking a wedding), but to be fair to the brides, I will not overbook. I have to make sure each wedding gets my full attention."

Soon after booking the date, the bride comes in for a consultation where Sibley advises them on the type and number of arrangements needed and flower choices as well as which items are paid for by the bride and which by the groom. Jake personally does all wedding consultations and 90 percent of all wedding design.

Live plants are another big part of their business. Many people request their signature double plants that include a live green plant in one side of a basket and a flower arranement in the other side. When ordered for funerals, Jake's provides a column for the plant at no charge.

Although designing floral arrangements for weddings, funerals, birthdays and holidays keeps them busy, it's by no means all that Jakes on the Avenue offers.

Jake's provide whole-home decorating for Christmas – or any other holiday or special occasion – including everything from trees to mantels, stairways, tables, entryways and more. Sibley noted there are only so many days in November and December, so anyone wanting them to decorate their home should call and reserve a date as soon as possible.

They'll start decorating their store in October to provide customers with creative Christmas decorating ideas. They also provide wonderful gift ideas for any occasion year round.

"We carry a line of things different from everybody else," Sibley said. "We specifically look for things that are unique yet affordable."

Choose a perfect gift or home accessory from items such as picture frames, home décor including fleur de lis items, lamps, decorative birdcages, a wide variety of table top accessories, museum-quality oriental pottery and dried custom arrangements. There are themed items for all seasons and holidays, and customers can bring in their own containers and fabric samples and have Jake's create a custom design for any room. See more gift and decorating ideas at jakesontheavenue.com.

Shoppers will also find the TRAPP Private Garden line of candles that include poured candles, votives, and reed diffusers, all of which are higher-end and a bit more intense due to the fact that each candle contains a bottle of perfume. The line is exclusive to Jake's on the Avenue and is one that Sibley chose because it is much sought after and has a long-lasting scent.

Sibley encourages everyone to order their flowers early for holidays, birthdays, anniversaries and other occasions, but still does his best to accommodate last minute callers. If they call by noon, he can usually have it done by the end of the day.

Jake's on the Avenue is open 8 a.m.-5 p.m., Mondays through Fridays, and 8 a.m.-2 p.m. Saturdays, with expanded hours for holidays and special events. To order, call 225-667-6670, fax 225-665-5009 or email jota@ftdimail.com.

"I have a wonderful designer, Sara Douzat, who has been with me for four years," said Sibley. "My daughter, Ashley Sibley, was brought up in the business but didn't show an interest in floral design. I knew she had the talent because as a child she would put together lovely arrangements. All of a sudden, she decided she wanted to try it, so she started helping out during weddings, and she's now working with us fulltime – and we're planning her wedding for later this year. Kathy Henderson, our sales manager, greets everybody, takes orders and relates to us designers what the customer is looking for.

Jake's on the Avenue has moved to 105 Range Ave., Suite C, where the entrance to the shop faces Whistlestop Coffeeshop and Railroad Avenue.

"And, as of about a year ago, I have a new business partner, Chuck Johnson. He has a lot of experience as a buyer for major department stores and has a great eye for buying art and other items and for merchandising."

Sibley added, "I have many loyal customers, and I'm so grateful for their business," said Sibley. "I'm telling my age, but I'm starting to service the grandchildren of some of my original customers. I believe I keep my customers by trying to always provide consistent service and unique floral creations. There's a misconception that we're high priced. We actually have something for every budget, and we keep our prices down as much as we can. Regardless of the products the customer chooses, they always receive our highest level of service. I get a lot of referrals, which is the best compliment I can receive."