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Holiday spree aids merchants in staying alive

By Joanne Maliszewski
staff writer

The mad rush in search of the now-famous Cabbage Patch dolls with parents willing to pay top dollar for the few remaining on store shelves was a sign of the times as most Farmington-area retailers report greatly increased Christmas sales over last year's sluggish holiday market.

"Christmas here was terrific for us," said Hirschel Levine who, with wife Toni, owns the recently enlarged Iona

and Gallery in Hunter's Square mall. "I definitely cannot complain."

The Levine's, who sell interior design items, glass and pottery gifts, clothing and jewelry, report a 25-percent sales increase over last Christmas. Despite their happiness over increased business, Levine added that sales "seemed" Christmas week because of the cold, snowy weather.

While jewelry accounts for half of Iona and Gallery sales, "the glass and pottery did pick up more so this year," Levine added.

Echoing Levine's sentiments about last week's cold weather, Barbara Palazzolo, K mart spokeswoman said, "In this particular year, the weather affected our sales. People were buying on better weather days. As far as strong sales, that kind of peaked and leveled off. In the good weather our sales went up. In bad weather they went down."

But Palazzolo says K mart officials aren't complaining as sales matched the official fourth quarter sales expectations of a 9-10 percent increase.

"I WOULD relate it not only to the economy but the upgrading of our merchandise," the spokeswoman said, pointing particularly to specialty sections such as the kitchen and electronics departments.

Without a doubt, however, the Cabbage Patch dolls were hot sellers as were other action toys such as G.I. Joe dolls, space and science fiction characters.

"The big ticket items sold best though," she said, pointing to home computers, televisions and solar-

powered calculators.

Books — all shapes, sizes and topics — apparently drew holiday shoppers' attention more than ever before with I Browse Bookstore owner Marc Winkelman joyfully exclaiming "he couldn't be more pleased" with up to 50 percent sales increase over last year.

"It was a very good book season," Winkelman said, adding that just about every type of book in the store sold well.

Louis Mahlin, owner of the Art Alcové on Grand River, says his sales this

Christmas increased by about 15 percent. Shopper, he said, began their holiday shopping much earlier this year than last starting even before the traditional Thanksgiving kick-off.

"People were buying more expensive items," Mahlin said, such as the more expensive easels, labies and oil painting sets.

Even those merchants and managers who did not have the time to talk with the Farmington Observer, such as one

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Drivers ratify contract

By Diane Hofsoess
staff writer

Farmington school bus drivers got what they wanted for Christmas — 5 percent pay raises for each of the next two years.

The raise will cost Farmington taxpayers an additional \$137,000 between now and June 30, 1985, when the contract expires. If all bus drivers work 40 hours a week.

The school district's 65 bus drivers, who were being paid up to \$7,095 a year depending on how many hours they worked, can earn up to \$8,935 under their new contract, which is retroactive to last July 1, said Robert Coleman, personnel director and chief negotiator for the school district.

Their pay will go up another 5 percent for 1984-85 school year, to \$8,436, he said.

"We're extremely happy with what we got," said Virginia Belcher, a driver for 19 years. The drivers, she said, approved the tentative contract, which gives them a 40-cent an hour raise, by a 52-2 vote on Dec. 19. The school board ratified the contract the next day.

Negotiations between the board and the drivers went on for five months, Coleman said. He described the negotiations as unusually long but not heated.

Besides the wage agreement, the new contract mandates bus drivers to work 41, rather than 40 hours a week, before being paid for overtime.

"This gives the drivers a little more leeway" in case field trips go over their estimated times, explained Coleman.

In the past, a driver who went over the regular 40-hour work week risked getting the other drivers upset for receiving overtime pay when others had fewer than 40 hours, said Belcher. The new extra-hour agreement will help alleviate that tension, she said.

"If you went over that 40 hours, you'd get into trouble with the other drivers," Belcher said. The drivers, she said, believe overtime should go to those with the most seniority.

James Hart of Westland, representative for the Michigan Education Support Personnel Association, bargained on behalf of the bus drivers.

He was out of state for the holidays and unavailable for comment.



TOM DAER/staff photographer

Keep those pets warm and cuddly during cold snap

By Diane Hofsoess
staff writer

In cold weather, pet owners need to take special care of their animals. That may sound pedestrian but, according to a Farmington veterinarian, many people forget that Jack Frost, like an 8-week-old pup, slips at dog tails and ears, not just human noses.

Horses, cats or dogs need extra attention, including fresh water and shelter from the harsh cold, Dr. David Carron warned from his office at Plaza Veterinary Hospital.

"No dog should be thrown out all night if he isn't used to being out in the cold," said Carron. On the other hand, "if you have a dog that's conditioned to being outside, it's OK to leave him out."

To comfort outdoor canines on below-zero nights and one-digit days, Carron recommended moving the animal's shelter inside a garage or shed where it's warmer.

The dog house should be up off the ground, maybe on bricks, and the door should not face the windy north, he said. The walls of the house should be windproof and waterproof, and the enclosure "should only be big enough for him to lie down and turn around in," Carron said, adding that animals have only their body heat and breath to warm their shelters.

Outdoor dogs need twice as much food in cold weather because they burn up energy just staying warm, the veterinarian said. Some weight loss during winter is common among outdoor dogs for this reason.

Indoor canines, however, like humans, tend to gain weight during the winter, he says. Their food intake should be decreased in winter.

"Extra weight is not good for dogs or humans," he said.

Some dogs — malamutes, huskies and samoyeds — are "in their glory" in winter. "They're snow dogs and made for outside weather," the veterinarian said.

"These dogs really shouldn't come inside in winter. They're used to the cold."

Carron, a veterinarian for seven years and owner of two dogs, said doggie sweaters and coats are a good idea, but not just because they keep animals warm: "They make (owners) feel better," he said, about having done something for their cherished pets.

He quickly adds: "I don't believe in those booties for animals. They can't walk in those things."

In the Pets 'n Particulars shop next door to the animal hospital, pet owner Kay Brakeville was shopping for winterwear for her mother's dog, Sandy Faulk, a German Shepherd of sorts. "He's 28 inches from his neck to his tail," said Mrs. Brakeville, flipping through the pile of dog togs. "He's got arthritis and thin fur, and my mother feels a sweater would help him in the cold."

A sales woman in the store said, "People will spend a lot of money on their animals for sweaters and coats. If you're not an animal lover, you do not understand. They treat their animals like children."

Marilyn Roble of Livonia said winter glamour wear for pets starts at \$5 for single-colored knit sweaters, and goes up to \$25 for cowboy-style suede coats with snap pockets for doggie biscuits.

Cats also require special care in winter, said Carron. Their ear tips sometimes get frostbite because the cats lean their ears next to windows too long, he says. Their tails, too, are frostbite victims on occasion. He tells of a cat that had to have its tail amputated because it was frostbitten.

Horse owners, he said, can help their animals through winter by giving them a little more corn to eat. The biggest problem with horses in cold weather, he said, is colic, an intestinal sickness caused by lack of fresh water.

Pet owners must never let their pets' water containers freeze, he said. Without fresh water, horse intestines block up and result in death.

"Horses with colic need to be seen right away," he said. A horse with colic will kick or bite at his abdomen and sides to show his pain, Carron added.



Chilling thoughts

Keeping animals warm during the winter season can be a challenge because neglect can be fatal. Marilyn Roble (above) shows how to help out those smaller pooches with the aid of a coat. For those animals that owners would rather keep outdoors or in the barn, like the pony and the mare (left), hay acts as a good insulation.

Botsford plans moving forward

By Joanne Maliszewski
staff writer

Construction on Botsford General Hospital's long-planned \$11-million expansion project is expected to begin before Dec. 31.

Work on a smaller part of the project — expanding the medical office building to three floors — "is still being held in abeyance" after hospital officials received much higher than expected construction bids, said Russ Tuttle, community relations director. Hospital officials' decision to move

ahead with construction before year's end came several weeks after Farmington Hills City Council voted to allow Botsford to become the third business to build higher than the city's height limit.

With a zoning amendment in their favor, Botsford is able to extend its south tower to a maximum 85-foot high — more than 20-feet taller than zoning allows.

Working on expansion plans since April 1982, Botsford officials plan to

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oral quarrel

Let's hear your wish for a brand new year

Okay, here's your chance to make that vow and/or wish and at the same time help out folks who are struggling to come up with some ideas for New Year's resolutions. Today's Oral Quarrel question is:

WHAT IS YOUR WISH OR VOW FOR THE NEW YEAR?

To answer this question, give us a call at 477-5498. You will have until 1 p.m. Friday to answer this question. Look in Monday's Farmington Observer for the answer.

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