



Despite his protest that it's too hot to try on winter coats, Stephen Labuhn and his mom check out the pre-season sale at Young Impressions in Rochester's Winchester Mall. (Staff photo by David Frank)



Discount clothing lured Oak Park residents Barbara Kraft and her daughter, Carolyn, 12, to New Generation, 29807 Northwestern, Southfield. (Staff photo by Mindy Saunders)

Dress growing kids in style—for less

Kids grow a lot during the summer. Unfortunately, clothing prices shoot up just as fast as they do. Mom doesn't have to empty her pocketbook outfitting Mary and Johnny for school. There are a number of ways she can inexpensively clothe them, according to area merchants. As prices rise, more people are shopping resale and discount shops, buying during sales and sewing clothes for their families. It's no longer "shameful" to shop resale shops, said Bea McCown, owner

of A Taste of Honey, 2514 Livernois, Troy. "Things have changed. Now it's 'Ha, ha. Look what I can do with my money,'" explained Mrs. McCown, who stocks her store with out-of-fashion fashions. Mrs. McCown said she buys "better apparel that's recently been laundered or dry cleaned. There can't be a flaw. If a button's missing, I don't want it," she said. WHILE RESALE shops carry used clothing, discount stores offer brand

name clothes at reduced prices. Discount store owners say they pass on to customers the savings they get by buying merchandise in large quantities or during the middle of a season. Richard Barstow, assistant manager of T.J. Maxx, 33049 Grand River, Farmington, said the East Coast has "turned into a discount store" and the rest of the country is following suit. "People are starting to realize they can buy the same type of thing (at a discount store) and get twice as much." T.J. Maxx also has stores in West Bloomfield, Warren and Westland Shopping Center. Merchandisers are having more sales than ever now, says Leonard Weinstein, part-owner of Young Impressions, a children's discount store in Avon Township and Madison Heights. "Everyone's promoting because the economy's so bad." But be wary, Weinstein said. "A real bargain is when you find something you would have been willing to pay the regular price for."

Although sewing is nearly always a savings, Don Riley, manager of Minnesota Fabric's Avon Township store, said he hasn't noticed an increase in fabric sales this school season. "If I knew why women aren't sewing, I'd be out there getting them in here. What you have to do is show them the speed with which they can make something, then show them how much they'll save." RILEY SAID HE recently went comparison shopping. Women who sew can save one-third to one-half what they'd pay for ready-made clothes, he said. That's generally more than they'd save even if they bought clothes on sale. Following certain guidelines will enable home sewers to put together school wardrobes that wear well and look good, he said. The experts also advise the following:

- Look for quality fabrics. With jeans, settle for nothing less than at least 14-ounce denim, suggests Weinstein. Anything less won't hold up during gym class or recess.
- Look for quality construction. Again with jeans, make sure pickets, zippers and other stress points are reinforced, Weinstein says.
- Buy separates that coordinate. A plain-colored vest can be interchanged with one or more skirts or pairs of slacks, as can be a plain-colored blazer.
- Don't buy everything new. Sharon Damerino, an Avon Township mother of three, said she's waiting to find out what her kids really need.
- Buy accessories - pins, ribbons, scarves, etc. They can altogether change the appearance of frequently-worn skirts, slacks and tops. "We're selling a ton of argyle socks," said Ilene Silverman, co-owner of New Generation, 29807 Northwestern, Southfield. "You can put a pair of argyle socks with an old skirt and right away you have the new classic look."
- Inventory what clothing the child already has, then make a list of what he really needs. Start with underwear, Weinstein suggests, and work your way to outerwear.
- Steer away from designer clothing. As operator of a sportswear company, Weinstein buys from manufacturers



It's wise to get an early start shopping for winter bargains. Gene Schoener and his daughter, Sondra, 10, check out coats at the discount T.J. Maxx, 33049 Grand River, Farmington Hills. (Staff photo by Randy Borst)

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