

Corn's-a-poppin' and the business is hoppin'

By Mary Rodrigue
staff writer

The Detroit Popcorn Co. might sound like small kernels, but don't be fooled, there's a lot more to the company than the name implies.

To brothers Richard and Robert Jasgur, Detroit natives who started with one popcorn wagon, the Redford company is a business which grosses \$250,000 a month.

The co-owners of the Popcorn Co. sell popcorn in every imaginable form — hybrid seeds to ready made, caramel or cheese covered, in bags, boxes, and balls — and sell and rent equipment and supplies for preparing food or entertainment.

Equipment can be rented for making everything from nachos to funnel cakes — and, of course, popcorn.

The stockroom on Telegraph north of Plymouth Road is filled with a huge stock of paper party supplies for every occasion.

It's a fun business, according to the co-owners.

"WE REALLY enjoy coming to work," Richard said.

And why not? The battering administered to the economy has obviously bypassed their business. When the brothers bought the company in 1969, it grossed \$3,000 the first month. Now a typical month brings in \$250,000.

"Everybody has a couple of cents in their pocket for a box of popcorn," Robert said.

"People won't give up entertaining themselves," adds his brother.

The Redford location acquired five years ago is their third. The business outgrew two smaller buildings on Fenkel in northwest Detroit.

The Jasgurs have plans to expand and remodel the present location and a new show room floor and shelving are already in place.

"We like Redford. It's been good to us," Richard said.

THE BROTHERS began with a single popcorn wagon and pedaled popcorn on the streets. Soon they bought ten more wagons, then went looking for a supplier to fill their needs.

"We didn't have food industry experience. We went to the smallest popcorn supply company in town and asked the owner if he wanted to sell," said Richard. "He did. Now we're one of the largest."

Just five years ago popcorn, cotton candy, and snow cone machinery were the company's only products. Two years later the Jasgurs added refrigeration — freezers, soft ice cream and milkshake machines — and began supplying local ice cream parlors.

A year ago they added their paper party line, everything from throwaway plates and cups to balloons and holiday decorations.

AND IN BETWEEN they boosted their supply of rental equipment to include antique popcorn carts, and machines for making hot dogs, nachos, pizza calzones and other sweet edibles.

"We'll rent out the equipment, sell them what they need, and teach them how to use it," Richard said.

A lot of business comes from walk-in customers who may spend only a dollar or two, he says.

"Because we buy from manufacturers, we keep the prices lower (than competitors)," he said. "We charge wholesale prices to all and draw clientele from across the state."

A CATALOGUE goes out to 30,000 Michigan consumers.

"Because big users — schools, hospitals, churches, fundraisers, the carnival industry, sports arenas — buy most of it, we can afford to sell the rest of it for low prices."

They don't supply many movie theatres, but do provide popcorn and goods to zoos, circuses and private parties. The Jasgurs supply nachos to the Silverdome and caramel and candy apples to 7-11 stores.

"Hybrid popcorn is the best quality, better than the stuff purchased in grocery stores," Richard claims. "All the kernels pop, and they're big."

Hours are 8:30-5:30 Monday through Friday and 8:30 to noon Saturday.



Richard (left) and Robert Jasgur, Detroit natives, started with one popcorn wagon. The company

now grosses \$250,000 a month.

ART EMANUELE/staff photographer

All I want for Christmas is my computer terminal

By Loraine McClish
staff writer

The first-ever, computerized Christmas is on display now in 12 Oaks Mall, put together by members of the Detroit Science Center, Texas Instruments and the artists and designers of the Novi shopping center.

William Clogg, a Farmington Hills resident and manager of 12 Oaks, called the display, "A classic Christmas of the 80s. It captures all the fun and excitement of the computers that most children have access to every day at school. And it blends in the feelings of joy and anticipation kids of all ages feel as they wander through a Christmas display as they wait in line to see Santa Claus."

Clogg said "There's a high level energy in the air here as Santa Claus and his elves and the music and magic of the traditional holiday season are seen in a contemporary setting that today's kids understand."

Clogg admits to some trepidation in wondering if Christmas and computers would compute into a traditional holiday display but any doubts were allayed with support that came from the Detroit Science Center, well-known for combining science and technology in hands-on displays that have entertained young visitors for years. Then later the same support that came from Texas Instruments, leaders in the home computer field.

NESTLED IN between snow covered trees, brightly wrapped packages and mechanical elves of traditional Christmas displays, are computers with bright Christmas graphics. These are both fun and educational computer games that reward children for spelling and computing correctly.

Then there is Santa's own computer for sending letters to the North Pole. Before the child reaches his way to Santa Claus, the youngster's letter is answered.

Brilliant computer Christmas graphics lace the outside of the presentation area with a series of entertaining scenes. There is a Christmas tree with blinking lights, a comic Santa, the building-up and melting-down of a cheerful snowman, all on large TV screens and accompanied by holiday melodies.

Meanwhile, efficient elves are creating toys while communicating, E.T. fashion, with Santa by way of a satellite saucer.

Santa's helpers are a team of computer students from Oakland University, assisting each child of whatever age, on basic home computer consoles.

All of the games have been designed by Texas Instruments, to challenge any computer skill level.

What is particularly gratifying for Clogg and the mall staff is that even the very youngest of the visitors are sensing the excitement of creating colors and shapes on the computer screens.

PLAYING A simple math or word game players receive a reward when the game is completed.

In the Create-a-Tree game, for example, the computer-user correctly fills in the blanks on the computer monitor with the correct holiday phrase and a dazzling Christmas tree with blinking lights appear and the computer then sings out 'O, Christmas Tree.'

Meanwhile Santa's Helpers from the Detroit Science Center are demonstrating the concepts of computer basics called "Explorations and Transportation," which is a look at the space program.

Getting a warm, fuzzy feeling of Christmas from a computer was no small challenge for Larry Molloy, a computer science instructor at Oakland Community College, when he was asked to help on the technical end of putting the display together.

"Getting people to sit down and be comfortable is one thing. But we set our goals higher. We wanted them also to have a positive traditional feeling about their experience at the computer presentation," he said.

"We think we got it. And we hope that parents can see the potential for education in these computers."

"When the Christmas tree lights up and the computer sings a carol to the child who completes the program, a

warm fuzzy Christmas feeling is guaranteed."

12 OAKS hosts a program and party for families and children of all ages with the computerized Christmas display, roving robots, a carol sing-along with a 500-voiced combined high-school choir, free refreshments and a Texas Instruments borne computer give-away Sunday.

The party and program run from 5:30-9 p.m. in 12 Oaks Center Mall. 12 Oaks is located at the intersection of Novi and 12 Mile, north of Interstate 96.

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The classic Christmas of the '80s with youngsters getting a crack at hands-on computer experiences while working their way up to meet Santa Claus is at 12 Oaks Mall. The computerized Christmas celebration is the first ever to be put together with the help of Detroit Science Center and Texas Instruments.

Mercy conducts registration

Registration for Mercy College winter semester day, evening and Weekend College classes is going on through Jan. 5. The term begins Monday, Jan. 10.

The College's admissions, academic counseling, financial aid and registrar's offices will remain open until 7 p.m. Tuesday, Jan. 4, and Wednesday, Jan. 5.

Information about class offerings, registration and fees can be obtained by calling 592-6030 or by visiting the admissions office on campus. New students are urged to complete the application process as soon as possible in order to ensure admission by the time classes begin.

Mercy College is at the Southfield Freeway and Outer Drive, south of Seven Mile Road, in Northwest Detroit.

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