

# Variety accents holiday shopping patterns

Continued from Page 8

"We sell so much stuff that our customers tell us that we shouldn't have sales help, we should have our guides," Smith joked. "We just keep ordering new things."

Brio Wooden train sets, retailing from \$20 to \$120, roller coasters made of colored wire and wooden beads and for teens, "Caboodle," a pastel-colored plastic fishing tackle box for makeup or jewelry are hot sellers this year, Smith said.

PIER 1 Imports assistant manager David Moraco said sales are "always expected to increase" during the holiday season and over the previous year.

Rattan chairs and trunks and brass accessories are popular as always, Moraco said.

One item is causing a few employees to scratch their heads in wonder: back scratchers, retailing at a mere 39 cents, are selling like hot cakes.

"I bet we have to order about 100 of them a week just to keep them in stock," Moraco said.

Road in Farmington Hills, carries a more unusual line of items, from kitchen and bath to bedroom and dining room accessories, he said.

"We're expecting our really big sales within the next couple of weeks," Moraco said. "What I've seen so far is nothing compared to what's coming."

Different is in. And this year's shopping list should be well-satisfied in the Farmington area with specialty stores, including those offering custom bathing suits, books on cassettes and puzzles.

**STORYTELLERS**, AT 22046 Farmington Road in Farmington's Crossroads shopping center, sells only cassettes that contain entire books narrated by familiar actors and actresses.

"It's up and coming," owner Mike Harris said of his merchandise.

Ed Asner, Susanna York, Donald Sutherland and Roger Moore are only a few of the popular cassette narrators, he said.

With 700 different titles, ranging from the classics to motivational

tapes, Harris said he has something for people to drive, travel and sleep by.

Harris runs an ongoing special that allows customers to return their tapes for a \$10 rebate.

The Rocking Horse Designs in Crossroads, 32345 Grand River in Farmington, ran Christmas sales in July, according to co-owner Sara Beckman. Cross-stitchers need ample time to prepare gifts for December, she said.

But with sales promotions, like the recent "Men's Night Only," designed to give men an opportunity to shop for exactly what their wives want, sales are continuing to climb, Beckman said.

The Puzzle Place, 32726 Grand River in Farmington's Village Commons shopping center, offers 600 different puzzles, from simple to 5,000 pieces, co-owner Bunny Ross said.

Sales at her specialty store are up because "there's a lot of puzzle people out there," she said.

ANOTHER SPECIALTY store

faring well during the holiday season (mostly because of the migration to warmer climates) is Beach Bound, 31065 Orchard Lake, Farmington Hills.

Catering to customers who may feel a little disappointed with typical department store bathing suits, Beach Bound offers "computerized" bathing suit fittings.

Customers select an appropriate suit style and owner Carol Bross determines proportions with the help

of a computer.

The suits, ranging in price from \$50 to \$65, are popular this season because shoppers are traveling out of town or out of the country over the holidays, Bross said.

Radio Shack manager Tim Fortier said this year, cellular telephones, universal remote control devices and video camera sales are up. The store, at 30808 Orchard Lake in Farmington Hills, has noted a steady increase in computer sales, especially

by the Tandy 1,000 TX.

Supporting the idea that shoppers are looking for more personal items, owner Hirschel Levine of Ilona and Gallery said he is seeing an increase over sales two years ago, when the store saw its highest volume ever.

Ilona and Gallery, 31045 Orchard Lake Road, Farmington Hills, sells handmade items from \$18 to \$2,000.

"I think it's the mix I offer that does it," Levine said. "I try to bring handmade art to the general public."

## School employees giving blood

Farmington Public School employees are planning a community blood drive during the week of Christmas, with the help of the American Red Cross.

Employees from throughout the district will be donating time in appointment scheduling and serving refreshments to make the event a success.

The blood drive will be held 1-7 p.m. Monday, Dec. 21, at Ten Mile

School, between Power and Farmington Road on 10 Mile. Maintenance employees from the district will be assisting in setting up the site.

The event is being scheduled during the holiday season, because it is traditionally a time when the blood supply is low.

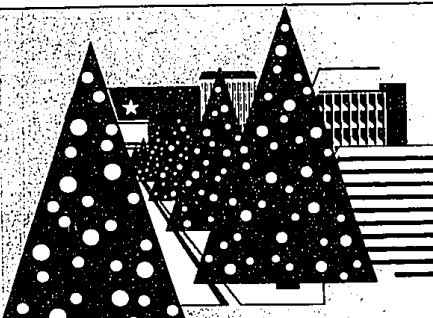
Driver Zoe Delair and Superintendent Graham Lewis are co-chairing the drive. "The most critical time for blood donation needs is from Dec. 21 through the end of the

year," said Lewis. "They usually run approximately 4,000 pints short; our goal is . . . to contribute 100 pints."

"We wish to extend our invitation to the community to join with us in giving a gift from the heart," and helping the season take on a special, personal glow," said a release from the employee group.

To schedule an appointment to donate blood, call Celi LeFevre at 477-1300.

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