

MALLS & MAINSTREETS

Kiddlywinks in-town move doubles the fun

BY SUSAN DEMAGGIO
STAFF WRITER

Take one cup of durable. Add a big dollop of warm. Sprinkle with lots of comfortable. Fold in a dash of fun. Set the pricetags to moderate.

Volla! That's the recipe for the success of Kiddywinks, a very special children's clothing store at 286 W. Maple in downtown Birmingham.

The nine-year-old Kiddylinks has done so well with its unique merchandise and personal service, that it's doubling its size by moving into larger headquarters down the street. To celebrate, customers are invited to a special Open House 5-9 p.m. Wednesday, Nov. 30. A guest appearance by Marc Ham of New York is scheduled. Ham is president of Flapdoodles, one of the best-selling clothing lines at Kiddylinks and one of the first to create cotton lycra leggings for children.

Customers are also being asked to bring in gently used and outgrown clothing to Kiddlywinks through Nov. 30 for a Flap-Me-Downs Collection which will be donated to Children's Orchards Lighthouse of Pontiac, The Judson Center and Mother Wattle's Shelter in Detroit.

opened Kiddlywinks in October 1965 as the first franchisee of a New York-based children's clothing shop known as R. J. Crumbeatcher. After a year and a half in Birmingham, she bought out the franchise and changed the name to Kiddlywinks, ready to do her own thing in 550 square feet of retail space at 120 W. Maple.

Obbron Kahn grew up in the area, graduating from Groves High School in 1975. She went on to become a special education teacher, working with deaf children for five years before following her husband's change of employment to New York City.

"I couldn't find a teaching job in New York, so I went to work in retail at R. J. Crumbeatcher's," she said. "When we moved back to the Detroit area, I knew I wanted to have my own children's shop. Downtown Birmingham is where I wanted to be. I love it here for the great customers, the other business owners, the wonderful small boutiques."

Kiddiowinks stocks boy's and girl's outfits from infant sizes through size 14. The clothing is 100-percent cotton, featuring the Flapdoodles line of mix and match playwear in leggings and coordinated tops and accessories. Lots of Halloween costumes are

sold year-round for fun, and eight different styles of tutus are available for young dancers.

Kiddlywinks also sells one-of-a-kind children's antiques on the premises which are warmly integrated into the shop's decor — a child's oversized dressing room. The interior was designed by Sara Cullen and Ron Rea who have placed much of the merchandise in wicker trunks and dresser drawers.

Customers walk into Kiddlywinks as if the shop was home. They're usually greeted by name, by a staff that includes Obron Kahn's mother and occasionally her 7-year-old daughter.

"I just love the clothes for kids here because the pieces are different, unusual," said Liz Sherbin, a Birmingham mother of two. "The quality's good for hand-me-downs and there are lots of gift possibilities. The help is great."

Kiddlywinks carries clothing from the funky to the traditional in just about anyone's price range with some separates starting at \$10. Obran Kahn orders the merchandise from manufacturers around the world, California to Israel. Some of the lines include Deux Par Deux, Rebels and Sim



STEPHEN CANTRELL/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Kids' closet: Cindy Obron Kahn stands in her new Kiddywinks shop in Birmingham where she's doubled her floor space and introduced antique furnishings for children.

ply Magic. Gift purchases are wrapped, free of charge.

Thanks to the new video screen wall, moms and dads can make selections with ease while the wee

ones are entertained by watching the latest music videos for the tot set. Kiddywinks is open during the holidays, Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Saturday 10 a.m.

to 5:30 p.m. Thursday and Friday
10 a.m. to 9 p.m. and Sunday 12:30
p.m.
Inquiries are welcome at (810)
540-1977.

Renovations move Northland and Tel-Twelve ahead

BY SUSAN DEMAGGIO
STAFF WRITER

Scissors sliced through red ribbons at two major Southfield shopping centers last week, dedicating renovated retail space to new life through the next decade.

An \$11-million remodeling project was completed in time for Northland Mall's 40th anniversary, and at Tel-Twelve Mall, Crowley's Department Store was totally redesigned to increase visibility and make room for new merchandise lines.

At Northland, Birmingham art

ist Marshall Fredericks showed up to see the Boy and The Bear sculpture he created in 1954 for the nation's first suburban shopping center, moved from the outside, inside. The bronze boy atop a marble bear that for years stood outdoors, now resides between Hudson's and Montgomery Wards in the west end of the mall.

Southfield Mayor Don Fracassa called Northland Center "a great lady," recalling the original gardens, sculptures and retail projects that helped put the city on Southfield on the map back in the

early 1950s.

State Sen. Jack Faxon muses that Northland was the birthplace of a city, spawning the subsequent "swift and rapid" development of housing, roads and other commercial enterprises that drew Detroiters from the city to the farmlands past Eight Mile Road.

The Rev. Loyce Lester pointed out that today 90 percent of Northland's clientele comes from Detroit. He praised general manager Catherine O'Malley for her support and ability to work with

diverse community of shoppers
and retailers.

The "new" Northland is brighter, lighter and more user-friendly. Cream-colored walls are accented in blue and teal. Pillars enhance visibility. Two new anchors opened at the center in early November, Montgomery Ward and T. J. Maxx. The grand old Hudson's at Northland is also being remodeled, department by department. Hudson's should be finished by the spring.

Changing Crowley's

The need to update and revital...

ize was also felt by Crowley's. Fresh from some hard financial times with a recent \$12-million business loan to move the company forward, Crowley's knocked down walls and rearranged departments at its Tel. Twelve Mall store. President Dennis Callahan said Crowley's plans to expand through new locations in Rochester, Novi and Pontiac.

"At Tel-Twelve, we needed to create the look of a traditional department store with the merchandise visible clear to the back of the store," he said. "Now shoppers can see all the different

departments available. It's exciting, inviting."

Callahan said the Macomb Mall store is the company's most successful, followed by Crowley's Westborn in Dearborn. "We've had a tough time in Birmingham and we're going to work hard to get that store going again."

He said the company is also producing more direct mail pieces and offering shoppers an 800-number to conveniently order merchandise.

Speeding sales at the register is another company goal and to that end 120 scanners have been ordered.

Tommy Lasorda's

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