

MALLS & MAINSTREETS

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SHOPPING CENTERED



Linda Backrack

One fish, two fish fans dig Blue Fish

If you ask a Blue Fish devotee to describe her fascination with the artful line of clothing designs, she will express her feelings for her favorite piece in terms like magical, childlike, comfortable, fun, free and whimsical. What more could you ask of an organic cotton jumper or a long vest layered over a vagabond pant?

Blue Fish creator Jennifer Barclay, 29, a design school dropout, was tie-dyeing and hand-painting T-shirts in her parents' garage just 10 years ago when she conceived the idea for her clothing line. Her parents told her to follow her heart. She did, and she shares that advice through the marketing of her unique clothes. Barclay is especially proud of the synergy and communication that her designs promote.

People always recognize a Blue Fish piece and it's a conversation starter. If you wear Blue Fish, be prepared for people to stop you on the street and comment on your outfit.

Byrne Frank of Bloomfield Hills knows the feeling. "I love being stopped," says the Blue Fish cultist. "I feel arty and unusual, yet I always look dressed. I could have a Blue Fish trunk show at my house. I have so many pieces."

Schooled in pairs

Frank was one of many fans who stopped by the Hannah Rowe boutique in Bloomfield Plaza toogle the fall and winter collections. Those who came in wearing designs from past seasons quickly realized that the new colors and shapes easily coordinated with their old pieces, an added bonus of the line.

Representative Julie George pointed out that anyone can wear Blue Fish — old, young, big, little. "It's all about attitude and doing your own thing," she said. "It's for those who like to be different and comfortable." Fall's gypsy colors and laid back styles are inspired by the Bloomfield literary group. Remember Vanessa Bell and Virginia Woolf? This season's hand-painted symbols include flowers and herbs, birds, artists' tools, autumn leaves and village houses. Another hallmark of Blue Fish is the vintage and handmade buttons that adorn jackets, vests and dresses. Further individualize with colorful fabric strips called Ripples, that gather up fabric to create unlimited looks. Hike up a skirt or cinch in a waistline.

Sales of the Blue Fish label have increased from \$4 million in 1992 to \$8.3 million last year. Essentially, the company sells the clothes as fast as it can make them.

Fish tales
This fall, look for thermal knits, cotton jerseys, lycra, even chenille robes. "Wonderful, sexy, fun," summed up Carole Hagg, a teacher from Bloomfield Township. "Perfect for the classroom."

"Timeless status symbols," added Hattie Pharrmer of Milford. "In 10 years, I'll be able to tell people, 'this is my Blue Fish from '95.'"

If you believe in the magic of clothing, as does Jennifer Barclay, you believe in her vision of Blue Fish — always evolving, constantly changing, open to inspiration. It's about the artistry of life.

In addition to Hannah Rowe, find Blue Fish at Neiman Marcus in the Somerset Collections, Troy, and Basile Goods in Birmingham. The new Blue Fish children's line will be available at Kidzdywinks in Birmingham.

Linda Backrack invites local retailers and shoppers to present ideas for this column as well as details about and photos of special merchandise worthy of featuring. To participate, call her at (313) 953-2047, mailbox 1889, or fax (313) 644-1314.

LOOKING AHEAD

What to watch for in Malls & Mainstreets next week:

- Most some super salespeople who make it fun to shop.
- Linda Backrack discovers the best way to back-to-school shop with kids.
- Added Attractions lists events at area shopping centers.
- Retail Details briefs you on changes in the marketplace.

New boutique owner shares retail plans



BY SUSAN DEMAGGIO
STAFF WRITER

There's no escaping destiny. Retailer Jeffery Axt is proof.

Though bent on a career in General Motors corporate world, the experiences of one summer led him to leave it all behind and go to work for himself as owner of a women's high fashion boutique. Like his father and grandfather before him, he operates a clothing store in downtown Detroit. Retailing is apparently in his blood.

"I never thought I'd be doing this," said Axt, 35, of Troy as he welcomed customers at his BIZR Collection on the second floor of the New Center Building on West Grand Boulevard in Detroit. "I had a great job at GM as a company labor representative. I got to travel and see different parts of the country. But when I heard this store was for sale, I hired a lawyer

and went after it. My aunt, Lillian Karamanlian, owned it and she wanted to retire."

"I had just returned from GM's two-week vacation which I spent boating around Charlevoix. The guys with all the big boats owned businesses. I met the man who owns Niliw's Chocolates for example. It was obvious to me that if I wanted a similar lifestyle, I'd better be in business for myself. Own something."

So Axt put all his energies into his new "baby." He changed the name from BIZR to BIZR Collection, re-styled the shop for the '90s and filled it with upscale, unique fashions for women in a wide range of sizes, 6-24. That's been the key to his success.

"The business tripled. I was approached by the landlords about taking over the shoe store down the al-

See BIZR, Next Page

Where can I find?

We found some super lightweight, yet very warm sleeping bags, thanks to Brenda Pasmak of Canton who suggested the Venture Outdoors Shop in Plymouth, and Marjorie Bain of Livonia who bought some at Dunham's.

Mrs. Hanne Westland wrote to Malls & Mainstreets last week unable to find adult-size sleeping bags without bulk to use on motorcycles or while backpacking.

At Dunham's, (810-288-2010) try the Tier One Mummy Bag, 4 pounds, 15 ounces. It will keep you warm to 30-degrees. It's made by Peak, a division of Coleman.

At Venture Outdoors, (313-453-1987) owner Dan Argus said the Moonstone System bags (goose down) weigh only 2 pounds, 8 ounces, allowing the sleeper to doze in temperatures as low as 10-degrees.

"These bags compress down to 12 inches in length," he said. "Some can open up to room for two

people." In colder climates, sleepers just add an A.C. Liner, also from Moonstone.

Here's the next challenge:

"Ten years ago I bought two doll buggies, exact replicas of the Silver Cross English From Baby Buggy from Great Britain. I now have a third granddaughter that I need to buy one for. I went back to the Doll Hospital shop where I bought the other two, but the ones they have now are from Germany and are not the same quality or look. Please help. Thank You." — Helen Watt of Redford.

If you know where Ma. Watt can find such a doll buggy, please give Malls & Mainstreets a call at (810) 301-2567. We'll print your response! You can fax an answer to (810) 644-1314. Or write Where Can I Find, c/o The Observer & Eccentric Newspapers, 805 E. Maple, Birmingham, 48009. New shopping challenges are also welcome through these avenues. Thank you!

Retailers can submit announcements of upcoming events and promotions for Added Attractions. The deadline is the Wednesday before publication. Send the facts to: Malls & Mainstreets, Observer & Eccentric Newspapers, 805 E. Maple, Birmingham, 48009. Or fax to: (810) 644-1314.

MONDAY, JULY 24

PHOTO EXHIBIT

Last day for mall's 8th annual Amateur Photography Show and Contest. Prizes for winners. Lovers Mall, Seven Mile/Highland. (313) 475-1185.

BARBARA WALDEN VISITS

Walden meets and advises customers through July 25 at her Hudson's Cosmetic Counter regular store hours. No appointments necessary. Register for Car-Tone vacation dinner. Northland, Eight Mile/Crestfield, Southfield. (313) 443-0000.

WEDNESDAY, JULY 26

CANDICE SCHENKING

Michigan Cancer Foundation's Mobile Detection Unit offers low cost mammograms in Jacobson's parking lot. Also, American representative provides prostate exams. Appointments required. Laurel Park Plaza, Six Mile/Fiveborough, Livonia. (313) 581-7888, ext. 218.

KIDS' SUMMER

Circle K presents live, musical production "Cinderella." 1 and 6 p.m. Free. Center Court. Come early for the best seats. Kids eat free at participating mall restaurants. Oakland Mall, 14 Mile/John R. Troy. (313) 585-0000.

ANTHONY'S SHOW

Over 40 dealers present books, furniture, pottery, glass and more, through July 30. Glass repair by Mr. Chris Applegate. The Village, 12 Mile/Telegraph, Southfield. (313) 283-1111.

THEATRE SAT

Kids enjoy cartoons and a movie at mall's cinema, part of Wednesday's summer series for children. Livonia Mall, Seven Mile/Highland. (313) 475-1185.

HERNANDEZ CONCERT

Robert Jones steel blues, singing, storytelling and string instruments to celebrate Afro-American mu-

ADDED ATTRACTIONS

MC, 10:30 a.m. J.C. Penney Court, Free T-shirts. Part of Northland Kids Club series. Northland Center, 8 Mile/Crestfield, Southfield. (313) 557-0400.

PAGE CONCERT

Music in the Park, Noon. Bring a lunch and enjoy an outdoor concert. Keltiggy Park, Mary Ann Arbor Trail, Plymouth. (313) 416-8447.

THURSDAY, JULY 27

'95 FESTIVAL

Sidekick sales, acapella street singers, balloon animals and much more through July 30. The Shop, The Shop traveling music show by Oakland County Parks 1 and 3 p.m. On July 28 at 1 p.m. On July 30 at 1, 3 p.m. West Oaks Center, 104 Novak, Novi. (313) 950-9000, ext. 083.

GENIE'S JAMBOREE

Carl Green performs "Infectious, uplifting" songs to enhance self-esteem. 11 a.m. and 6 p.m. Sign language interpretations. Center Court, Free. Westland Mall, Middlebelt/Plymouth, Livonia. (313) 622-4100.

SALE FREE

Arrive Birmingham Community House event through July 30 at around town. 7:30 p.m. Alexander Zorlo and Friends in Stein Park. Call for tickets and details. Bama/Merritt, Downtown Birmingham. (313) 644-0832.

STREETCARTS OBSERVATION

Through July 30, Fast Road businesses offer clearance sales and summer discounts. Ford/Shepton, Canton. (313) 493-0040.

OUTWALK SALES

Throughout the mall through July 30. Also paper show, "A History of Detroit" presented daily at 11 a.m., 1, 3 and 7 p.m. Saturday 11 a.m. 1 and 3 p.m. Missionbrook Village Mall, Adams/Weston, Rochester Hills. (313) 378-0481.

STREET SHOWING

Stock Market performs ragtime beats 7-11 p.m. Hosted by Ann Arbor of 83.9 The River. Part of summer

Foley series. Free. Fourth St./Main, Downtown Rochester. (313) 656-0000.

SKINCARE CLINIC

Cutis artists at Saks Fifth Avenue offer skin consultations, mini facials and make-overs through July 29. Call for appointment. Somerset Collection, Big Beaver/Coolidge, Troy. (313) 643-0000, ext. 201.

LARGER BOOKS TRUCK SHOW

Valentina's Boutique features manufacturer's representatives for consultations and special orders. 10 a.m. to 8 p.m. On July 28 and 29, 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Refreshments. Meet Sharon Phillips, Don Jones, Lorie, Ada Mable, 2 Flare, Lida Caputo. Applebush Square, Northwestern Hwy./I-76, 12 Mile, Southfield. (313) 354-4560.

FASHIONS AT LUNCH

Casual clothing from Free East Informally presented from noon to 2 p.m. at Stage & Co. Restaurant. The Boardwalk, Orchard Lake/E. Maple, West Bloomfield. (313) 855-5622.

PAGE CONCERT

Summer Series. 7:30 p.m. Free. Bring a blanket or lounge chair. Bama/Merritt, Birmingham. (313) 644-1700.

SATURDAY, JULY 29

PLYMOUTH FARMER'S MARKET

7:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. choose from fresh produce, plants and baked goods every Saturday through October. The Gathering, Across from Keltiggy Park. (313) 483-1540.

FARMINGTON FARMER'S MARKET

Now through Oct. 28 in the Village Commons Shopping Center parking lot. 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. Flowers, fruits and vegetables. Grand River/Farmington Rd. (313) 473-7278.

SUNDAY, JULY 30

BATHAN AND REBEH

Come meet the characters from Batman Forever wearing authentic costumes from the film. Noon to 4 p.m. Center Court, Westland Mall, Middlebelt/Plymouth, Livonia. (313) 822-4100.