

MALLS & MAINSTREETS

MONDAY, AUGUST 12

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SHOPPING CENTERED

Daisy days: A funky twist with '70s style in a black, zip-front jacket, \$14.99 and matching shorts, \$14.99 from Target.

Lots that's cool for back to school

BY LINDA ANN CHOMIN
SPECIAL WRITER

Look for bright colors combined with classic styles to set the hottest trend in back-to-school fashions for elementary students this fall.

"Bright is everything, bright and bold," said Delana Rutledge of The Children's Place at Oaklawn Mall, Troy. "For girls, people are buying plaid skirts in hot pink, yellow and orange (\$18)."

All of the separates at The Children's Place including jazzy black and white houndstooth skirts, shorts, dresses, jumpers, leggings and jeans, were meant to mix and match. Patent leather jackets (\$28), jumpers and dresses (\$20) now on reorder, hit the store as fast as they came in. Plaid fleece-lined CPO jackets (\$22) for boys are selling like crazy, according to Rutledge.

Classic looks in wide-wale corduroy pants (\$22) are still popular, plus cords now come with matching baseball caps in tan, camel navy and black (\$8).

Prowashed denim jeans in vintage and dark blue available in flare leg, tomboy cut with scooped waist, relaxed, and relaxed slim fit (\$16-\$18) are staples for back-to-school dressing.

For little jocks, wool varsity jackets, leather gray with leather trim (\$42-\$52) are expected to arrive shortly.

Tammy Dinatelo, sales associate for Gymboree at Laurel Park Plaza, Livonia, says that reversible fabrics of plaid, flannel and fleece are big for boys. Vests are must-haves.

"There's a lot of red and floral prints for girls. Jumpers are real hot, swing tops and jackets, berets and suspenders, and vests are very, very hot for both boys and girls," she said.

According to assistant manager Emilie King, reversible denim and plaid jackets with moose patch (\$30), topped off with a cap with ear flaps (\$12) from the Northern Exposure collection, seem to be especially popular with the younger set. Also, thermal shirts in gray, royal blue, hunter green and gold, \$24.

Red, black and white in solids or stripes is a big color statement for fall at Target in Westland. Girls will have fun wearing black and red jumpers by Xhilaration decorated with patent heart or flower appliques teamed with shirt for \$19.99 or denim shortalls priced at \$14.98.

Accessorize with 101 Dalymatians hair bows (\$3.99) and bands (\$4.99). Boys will look like little jocks in a blue and gold running helmet. Wolverines running suit by Professional Sports Club (\$29.88).

It's easy for Colleen Clark of Westland to tell which backpacks and school merchandise will be most popular with her 8-year-old son Brent this year. She simply takes note of which stock is low. To start the school year off right, Brent will sport new jeans, tennis shoes, and a Tasmanian Devil T-shirt by Warner Brothers (\$8.99).

"I always take him with me to get a few basics to encourage him to get in the mood to go back to school," said Clark.

Arctic Zone insulated lunch boxes (\$8.99) or bags (\$5.39) are available not only in solids but with children's favorite characters as well. From Toy Story to Tigger from Winnie-the-Pooh, there's literally something for everyone. A word of advice from Clark however, Batman is out! Goosebumps, Looney Tunes, the Hunchback of Notre Dame, and Team NASCAR — in.

The '60s return this season at Kiddlywinks in Birmingham — at least with the youngest crowd.

"We're selling a lot of shepita like the old vests Sonny and Cher used to wear, also velour, animal prints and Mylar outerwear. Kids ages 5 to 10 really like the satin jeans (\$36) and painters pants (\$36-\$39)," said salesperson Barbara Grant.

Varsity rugby shirts in blue and gold (\$34) and hockey jerseys are what's in for students at Gap-kids' Farmington Hills and Livonia locations. Back by popular demand is the 1969 division champs varsity jacket with beige sleeves and navy body priced at \$148. Also look for their new collection of denim decorated with bullgird, football and pennant patches (\$14.50-\$34) for age 8 under and red plaid flannel shirts (\$28-\$34).

Budget savers

According to Children's Orchard of Canton owner Kay Suffron, every year customers look for primary colors when shopping for school clothes. If your budget is especially low, all this new clothes, could be the answer. On average, an entire outfit consisting of jeans or pants plus shirt or sweater, costs about \$10 or less.

Business booms along Big Beaver



Restaurants, hotels, and office buildings catch Somerset fever as business booms along both sides of the new shopping center in Troy.

BY BARR PERT TEMPLETON
SPECIAL WRITER

The countdown to the grand opening of Somerset North is finally here and the importance of the event isn't lost on businesses in the surrounding area.

Hotels, restaurants and office complexes along Big Beaver in Troy have been reaping the benefits of a planned addition to the Somerset Collection for months.

The grand opening of the 120 specialty shops at Somerset North this Friday even prompted some businesses to do some fixing up of their own. A fresh coat of paint, lavish landscaping and even a new parking lot should help Gorman's Furniture Store stand out along Big Beaver just south of the Somerset Collection.

At least that's the plan co-owner John Roberts had in mind when he decided to give the exterior of his 19-year-old store "a whole new fresh look."

"Everyone's sprucing up and getting all dressed up for this," said Roberts, who is eagerly anticipating the opening at the mall. "Everybody driving in off I-75 will drive right by our store and so we expect to get a lot of exposure and traffic that way," he added.

Just up the street at the Somerset Inn it's the foot traffic that has kept abeyance hopping. Somerset Inn General Manager Duane Swanson is pleasantly surprised when he checks his reservation list these days.

"Bookings are very solid, there are a few open dates but not many," said Swanson, who said the crowds at his hotel aren't limited to overnight. "We have also had many of our banquet facilities in use as interview locations for the new stores."

The Somerset Collection has spent months interviewing applicants to fill 3,600 new positions in Somerset North. "The opening of the north end has definitely helped us," said Swanson. "Although we've been strong for this first six months of the year, it's definitely picked up a couple of notches."

The 24-year-old hotel that boasts 250 guest rooms didn't have to worry about revamping their image



Spruce-up time: With thousands of visitors expected to check-out the new Somerset Collection shopping complex this weekend, neighboring businesses want their best foot forward too. Gorman's Furniture is busy remodeling its showroom front.

this year. Somerset Inn was completely renovated just two years ago, said Swanson.

Noting that a large portion of hotel's business is generated through corporate accounts, Swanson anticipates people booking rooms on more of a leisure basis to shop at the impressive new facility.

"We're hoping the weekend traffic will pick up because the mall is going to be a destination spot for folks that want to have the premiere shopping experience in southeastern Michigan," said Swanson.

Down the block at the Marriott Hotel the prospect of another nearby spot for guests to shop gets a huge thumbs up from general manager, Bob Grossman.

"The short term impact on us has been very positive," said Grossman, relaying that members of Somerset's management team have been staying at the hotel. "Long term it will give the guests something else to do because it's close by."

The Marriott is preparing to do some sprucing up of its own. "All 350 rooms in the hotel will be redone in the next several months including the banquet and conference facilities," said Grossman.

Beyond retail and overnight reservations, local leasing agents claim business owners are clamoring for office space in the buildings located

in close proximity to the mall.

Getting a spot along what has already been dubbed "The Golden Corridor" may prove tough in the coming months, according to Larry Nemer, vice president of Nemer Management Co., Inc. Nemer's firm oversees the leasing of commercial office space in Troy Place. The complex, that includes five buildings covering 800,000-square feet, sits on the corner of Big Beaver and Coolidge, just across the street from the Somerset Collection.

"Somerset is such an exciting project it will anchor that entire corridor so we see it as a plus," said Nemer. "And we have some vacancies now but about 95 percent of the complex is currently leased."

Similar tales of space deficiencies are reported for the Top of Troy and City Center complexes along Big Beaver.

"We are running out of space at the Top of Troy and we are approaching capacity at the City Center, which used to be the old VW building," said David Miller, an associate broker with Signature Associates, a commercial real estate brokerage firm that manages leasing for both facilities.

Development along Big Beaver, including the new mall, is attracting all kinds of business including

smaller firms who want to be a part of what Miller describes as "Troy's wonderful rebirth."

"Just three years ago Troy had a 20 percent vacancy rate. Now it's down to about 10 percent," said Miller. "And we've even had tenants fighting over certain spaces in buildings."

All this talk of growth and progress is music to the ears of Troy City Manager, James Bacon. Just the thought of adding 950,000 square feet of new retail space inside the city is a plus for the entire area, said Bacon.

"I think it's going to be another attraction people will think about when they decide to come to Troy," he said. "And having a very high quality shopping experience is always a positive plus the employment opportunity is significant."

"Economically it's a very positive and significant addition and I think it will help the restaurants and hotels in the community," he said. The city is concerned, however, that once Somerset North opens, traffic snarls along streets in the area will be a problem.

"We're anticipating this project will have an impact (on traffic) but for the short term that issue is being addressed with off-site parking, shuttle services and valet," he said.

ADDED ATTRACTIONS

Somerset Collection North/South. Big Beaver/Coolidge. Troy. (810) 643-3900.

FRIDAY, AUG. 12

Opening Amusements

P.O. Schwarz Toy store opens at Somerset Collection North with 10 a.m. all-star cast including Barbie, Truffles the Bear, Patrick the Pup, Paddington Bear. Day-long activities set. Big Beaver/Coolidge. Troy. (810) 643-4654.

Family fun

SABSAU African drummers and dancers perform 6:30-7:30 p.m. in front of city hall. Part of shopping district's summer series. Free. Pierce/Merrill, Birmingham. (810) 433-3550.

Fine Art Fair

Through Aug. 18 at Olde World Canterbury Village. Presented in cooperation with Orion Art Center. 10 a.m. to 7 p.m. Sunday to 5 p.m. Friday book signing by Patricia Hill Burnett 4-6 p.m. in the King's Court Castle Restaurant. Free admission and parking. 1-75/Joslyn Rd. Lake Orion. (810) 391-6700.

Woodward Dream Cruise

Kids off parade down Woodward from Fernside through Birmingham. For complete details of events and performances call the hotline (313) 953-2005. Program continues through Aug. 17.

Informal modeling

Featuring fashions from the Gap and Mimi Maternity, presented during lunch, noon to 2 p.m. at D. Dennison and Allie's American Grille. Also Aug. 19-Sept. 1, visit Center Court to enter to win one of four trips to New Orleans for the Super Bowl.

Laurel Park. Six Mile/Newburgh. Livonia. (313) 462-1100.

SATURDAY, AUG. 17

Children's Show

"The Emperor's New Clothes," presented by Children's Entertainment Co. 1 and 3 p.m. Free. Come early for the best seats. Livonia Mall. Seven Mile/Middlebelt. (810) 476-1160.

Kids' Fest

Family fun, 1-4 p.m. at Parisian Department Store, co-sponsored by Nickleodeon Games, events, back-to-school fashion show, refreshments, bubbles, chance to win trips to Universal Studios.

Laurel Park. Six Mile/Newburgh. Livonia. (813) 953-7625.

Family fun

Jacobson's and North Oakland YMCA team for family fun fest. 6-9 p.m. Carnival rides, clowns, face-painting, games, refreshments. Tickets and details by calling the mall. Also at 8:30 p.m., local authors sign their books for readers and collectors.

Great Oaks Mall. University/Livonia.

Rochester Hills. (810) 651-6000.

Farmer's Market

Both downtown Farmington and Plymouth have small produce, bakery and craft stands from the morning until afternoon each Saturday in the heart of their business districts until late October.

(313) 453-1540.

Jacobson's Events

Face painting with Matilda the Clown 1-3 p.m. Kids Shop, also visit by Chef Billy Bones in the Kitchen Shop from noon to 4 p.m. On Aug. 18 ventriloquist Todd Gale and his troupe 1 p.m. Kids Shop.

836 W. Maple. Birmingham. (810) 645-8510.

Kids Program

Thi Penfil offers morning of puppet-making 11 a.m. Border's Books and Music Children's Department. 3099S Orchard Lake. Farmington Hills. (810) 737-0110.

SUNDAY, AUG. 18

Storybook Sunday

Chris Edmonds of WNIC reads a childhood classic 1 p.m. Center Court. Mall coupons for book reports redeemed.

Fairlane Town Center. Hubbard/Southfield Pkwy. Dearborn. (813) 593-1370.

Fashion Show/Sale

Fashion Expo '96, 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Local designers with original collections for all members of the family. Admission \$1. The Elks Lodge. 1451 E. Big Beaver. Troy. (810) 689-2500.

News of special events of interest to shoppers is included in this calendar. Send information to: Malls & Mainstreets, c/o Birmingham Eccentric, 805 East Maple, 48009; or fax (810) 644-1314. The deadline is Wednesday at 5 p.m. for publication on Monday.

MONDAY, AUG. 12

Be True To Your School

Receipts toward learning materials benefits schools of shoppers' choice. Program in place through Jan. 31, 1997. Available only at Lakeside, Sterling Heights, Two Oaks, Novi; Briarwood, Ann Arbor; Fairlane, Dearborn. (810) 348-9438.

Puppet Shows

"The Reluctant Dragon" daily through August in the puppet pit, 11 a.m. 1 and 3 p.m. Sunday, 1 and 3 p.m. Also Aug. 17 and 18 be amazed and amused at Mario Magic Show, 11 a.m. 1 and 3 p.m. Sunday 1 and 3 p.m. in Center Court. MaureenMonte photo show Aug. 16-23.

Meadow Brook Village. Walton/Adams. Rochester Hills. (810) 375-9451.

TUESDAY, AUG. 13

Kids Club Meets

Children ages 2-5 invited to paint ceramic Disney characters as part on monthly program beginning at 11 a.m. in the plaza's mini mall. Wear old clothes, materials provided. Newburgh Plaza. Six Mile/Newburgh. Livonia. (810) 649-6500.

Comedy Night

Open Mike comedy 7:30 p.m. Borders Books and Music. Public invited. Orchard Lake/14 Mile. Farmington Hills. (810) 737-0110.

WEDNESDAY, AUG. 14

Used Book Sale

Annual Brandeis University Sale through Aug. 21. Tonight is opening night from 9:30 p.m. to midnight. \$4 donation this evening only. All books half-price Aug. 20 and 21. Tel-Twelve Mall. 12 Mile/Telegraph. Southfield. (810) 353-4111.

THURSDAY, AUG. 15

Somerset Family Opening

3-10 p.m. Disney Extravaganza to introduce shoppers to the new mall. Activities on both sides of the collection. Free. Photo ops with characters and interactive exhibits. Musical performances.