



**Gifts of gold:** Care facilities encourage gifts like frames and potpourri for their residents. These come from Hudson's.

## Older folks need very special gifts

If your holiday gift list includes someone in a nursing home or long-term care facility, here are some ideas.

Mike Connors, program director of the Southeast Michigan Office of Citizens for Better Care, said the best gift is simply your presence.

"But don't just visit during the holidays," he urged. "Make a commitment to visit that person regularly throughout the year and stick to it. If it's not an ongoing thing, it's not as meaningful."

Founded in 1969, Citizens for Better Care is a private, non-profit citizen advocacy organization that strives to improve the quality of care and life for people in long-term care facilities.

Connors also suggested giving things to help personalize the resident's living space — things like calendars, pictures, and albums of family photographs.

Don't let the fear of theft deter you from giving gifts you know your loved one will enjoy, he said. "If you stop bringing in everything for fear of it getting stolen, the person has no life left," he said.

Nursing homes and long-term care facilities are required by law to keep an inventory of each resident's belongings and if something on the list gets lost or stolen, they must try to find it, Connors said.

Before giving anything edible as a gift, make sure that it doesn't violate any dietary restrictions that the resident may have. Also, audio recordings of loved ones make great gifts for people who have failing eyesight.

Talking Book World, which has locations in Birmingham, West Bloomfield, Southfield, Lathrup Village, Livonia, Dearborn, Waterford and Roseville, is an excellent source for books on tape, with more than 5,000 titles in each store. For more information, call (248) 945-9999.

Lisa Gigliotti said listening to cassette tapes of soothing and uplifting music helped her when she was a nursing home resident.

As a young woman, she was diagnosed with rheumatoid arthritis and became bed-ridden. Her mother and grandmother lovingly cared for her at home, but after they were killed in a car crash, she went to live in a nursing home.

She made a remarkable recovery. Now in her mid-50s, she is a policy adviser for the Senate Majority Policy Office on issues of mental health, assisted suicide (which she's against), families, and human services.

Besides cassette tapes, she told me that she recommends giving the following gifts to nursing home residents: non-slip slippers, which are invaluable because the floors are usually cold; robes, lap robes and bed jackets for warmth and privacy; and potpourri and scented soaps and creams, to help mask the unpleasant odors that are often in nursing homes.

Magazine and book-of-the-month club subscriptions are a great gift, because they give the recipient something to look forward to, she said.

Other items she suggested can be found at stores that sell medical supplies. Beyers Friendly Drugs, 1100 W. Ann Arbor Road in Plymouth, carries a lot of them, including: 2-foot-long shoe horns, about \$9; grabber extenders for picking up items without bending or reaching; \$9; sock pulls to help put on socks; \$9; and full-page sheet magnifiers for reading, \$3.99.

For more ideas, contact Visually Impaired Information Center Inc. in Livonia, a national organization that has put together a directory of merchandise catalogs and services designed to help visually impaired people, (313) 421-6599.

Also, you can pick up a free copy of JC Penney's "For Your Special Needs" catalog, which includes Velcro clothing and other helpful things in the catalog department of JC Penney stores.

## Exploration Station

### Mall exhibits teach computer innovations



Twelve Oaks and Lakeside malls are a classroom of sorts this holiday, introducing kids to the wonders of new computer technology based on themes from the shopping centers' holiday decor packages.

By BARD PERT TEMPLETON  
SPECIAL WRITER

Shopping for computer gadgets to please all the techno fans on your Christmas list may seem overwhelming, but a stop at the Holiday Exploration Station at Twelve Oaks Mall, or The Peanuts and Popcorn Place at Lakeside Mall, should ease most concerns.

The exhibits boast computers and other high-tech equipment that can introduce shoppers to the latest technology packages, tied into Lakeside's Charlie Brown Christmas theme and Twelve Oaks' Crystal Forest.

Instructors from TechnoMasters, a Birmingham-based technology organization, double as station masters providing guidance and assistance to shoppers of all ages. Offering tips on the newest technology to holiday shoppers free of charge was part of mall managements desire to offer something extra to its patrons, said TechnoMasters Vice President Tom Clevinger.

"We have a contract with the malls to give shoppers some real computer experience using just 15 or 20 minutes of their time," Clevinger said. "And we don't sell anything, we just help with the educational experience."

The exhibits are open to the public on weekends during regular mall hours. During the week the station is available to school groups, from preschool through eighth grade, for a nominal charge per child.

A recent Sunday afternoon found a steady flow of interested shoppers dropping in to the twelve Oaks exhibit. Assistants from TechnoMasters greet visitors at the door offering a mini-tour or welcoming families to browse on their own. A brief explanation of each station and simple instructions for operating the computer are available at every terminal.

One of the most popular areas among the younger set is the Robotics Zone. That's where simple clicks of the keyboard give the users information so that they can dictate the moves of Lego blocks placed in the center of the station table.

"The kids really like getting that information off the screen and then being able to control something outside the computer with it," said Clevinger. The Internet Zone is a station that allows visitors to journey around the world to learn all about holidays in different countries. The user can select the country and the holiday such as Christmas, Hanukkah and Kwanzaa.

The Gadget Zone gives the latest look at video and digital camera technology. Visitors can stand at opposite ends of the room and conduct a video conference while typing messages to one another.

"The fun part of this is that all of the stations are at a pretty basic level but it's still the coolest technology using the newest equipment," Clevinger said.

Laughing and giggling were most prominent at the "Googing" station whose software set-up allowed visitors to select a picture of someone and then manipulate their faces to hilarious poses with a simple click of the mouse. Users could also take their own picture and have it appear for re-design on the terminal.

"The face morphing is the same technology used in movies like Roger Rabbit and Mask," said Clevinger.

A pair of teen shoppers from Farmington Hills were enjoying a nice break from the mall crowds inside the station. Elizabeth Jackson, 13, and Jessica Levers, 13, really enjoyed the "Googing" station.

"Is this the coolest or what?" Jackson asked Levers as she twisted the face of the Mona Lisa into a rubberized mess. Other faces on hand to re-mold included that of President Bill Clinton, Senator Ted Kennedy and England's Prince Charles.

Seeing visitors enjoying the station and not shying away from utilizing the computers pleased Clevinger and his instructors. Shawn Maxwell, of Farmington Hills, has worked for TechnoMasters for several years and enjoys the chance to bring the computer technology closer to the community via mall settings and school programs.



Computer fun: Students from Baylor Woodson School in Inkster enjoy the afternoon playing with holiday computer programs at Twelve Oaks Mall in Novi.



Click on: (Left to right) Nikia Allen and Martin Jones, each 7, listen as Cindy Cheaves of Techno Masters explains some computer fundamentals.

"This has really been a good experience and the kids have a great time," said Maxwell. "I'd say the Googing and Lego stations are most popular."

"Hands on displays are a big plus because you can walk in and quickly see the programs and grab some information," added Clevinger.

The Holiday Exploration Station and the Peanuts and Popcorn Interac-

tive Kids Place will be at the malls through December 28. The next technology exhibit by TechnoMasters will begin on January 24 at the Briarwood Mall in Ann Arbor in conjunction with the University of Michigan Museum of Art's Monet exhibit. To contact TechnoMasters regarding visits or school technology education programs call Clevinger at (248) 258-9075.

News of special events for shoppers is included in this calendar. Send information to: Malls & Mainstreets, c/o The Observer & Eccentric 805 East Maple, 48009; or fax (248) 644-1314. Deadlines: Wednesday 5 p.m. for publication on Sunday.

## ADDED ATTRACTIONS

### SUNDAY, DEC. 14

**Week-long silent auction**  
Livonia Mall hosts silent auction to benefit the Make-A-Wish Foundation through Dec. 23 at 5 p.m. Bids begin at \$500 for a higher bidder to receive a cornucopia of gifts valued over \$1,000 — including a basket of beanie babies, diamond ring, bracelets, pocket watch, pearl necklace, CD's, Gucci watch, sweatshirt, plush toys and \$100 mall gift certificate. Bid at the Information Booth.

**Seven Mile Middlebelt.**  
(248) 476-1160.

**Holiday exhibit open**  
Through Dec. 31, stroll through Victorian England recreated in 23 animated vignettes portraying the Charles Dickens classic *A Christmas Carol*. The 8th annual holiday exhibit is presented by Hudson's during regular store hours. Group tours are available to classes, clubs. There is no charge for admission.

**Summit Place Mall.**  
Elizabeth Lake/Telegraph. Waterford.  
(248) 683-5229.

**Holiday Puppet Event**  
Children's Theatre of Michigan presents *Whose Ear-muffs are these anyway?* at the Pageant Wagon Theater in the Somerset Collection South rounds, through Dec. 24 at 1:30, 3:30, 5:30 and 7:30 p.m. Sundays 1:30 and 5 p.m. Free.

Santa Claus photos in his three-story castle in Somerset North's Grand Court. Photo operation runs through Dec. 24 with option of Polaroid shot \$10, or roll of 35mm film for \$15, processed at parent's convenience. Appointments with Santa optional. A copy of the book "The Giving Season," available for \$19 at Ritz Camera with \$2 from each sale to Toys For Tots.

**The Somerset Collection.**  
*Big Beaver/Coultide.* Troy.  
(248) 816-6484.

**Village Santa**  
The local skating rink features children at play and forest animals with Santa Photos under a snow-covered pavilion through Dec. 24.  
**Mendowbrook Village Mall.**  
Walton/Adams. Rochester Hills.  
(248) 376-9451.

### Dept. 56 Village

Kids can send Santa E-mail messages from a computer station on the upper level, near JC Penney's. Santa visits and photos through Dec. 24. Snow Village Dept. 56.  
**Oakland Mall, 14 Mile/John R. Troy.**  
(248) 585-6000.

**Carousel Santa**  
A 38-foot tall holiday carousel imported from Germany in mall's center court amuses visitors waiting for Santa. Laser light shows in the food court Thursdays/Fridays 6 and 7 p.m. Saturdays/Sundays 1 and 3 p.m. through Dec. 22. The 15-minute show features a car drive for the Michigan Humane Society.  
**Wonderland Mall, Plymouth/Middlebelt, Livonia.**  
(313) 622-4100.

**Santa photos**  
"Wishes Can Come True," theme with giant reindeer and Santa sleigh, photos (\$6.95) through Dec. 24. Annabelle's Wish video and plush toy, \$16.95, to benefit Make A Wish Foundation at Information desk.  
**Livonia Mall, Seven Mile/Middlebelt.**  
(248) 476-1160.

**Polar Bear Christmas**  
Digital image Santa photos through Dec. 24, giant polar bear decor.  
**Westland Center, Wayne/Warren.**  
(313) 425-5001.

**Crystal Forest Set**  
Santa will be in The Crystal Forest along with 136-life like animals designed and created by Ann Arbor artist, Ira Imbras-Janssen through Dec. 24. Exploration Station offers computer-activities for classrooms and groups.  
**Twelve Oaks, 12 Mile/Novi.**  
(248) 345-9411.

**Snowflake Express**  
Santa Claus photos plus an exhibit highlighting the December holiday traditions around the world.  
**Tri-Twelve Mall, 12 Mile/Telegraph, Southfield.**  
(248) 355-4111.

**Charlie Brown Christmas**  
See the Peanuts Gang in various holiday settings with an 18-foot high Snoopy doghouse featuring a 36-foot tree through the roof. Santa photos through Dec. 24. Special computer-animation/lesson field trips available for classrooms.  
**Lakeside Mall Road, Sterling Heights.**

### (810) 247-4131.

**Northstar Journey**  
Santa Claus gives kids a free coloring/story book based on the Boy and the Bear's search for the Northstar throughout the mall. Letters to Santa at "Poetical Station" in Montgomery Ward's Court. Trolley on duty through Dec. 23 from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. with free boxed lunches between office buildings and shopping center.

**Northland Center.**  
Nine Mile/Greenfield. Southfield.  
(248) 569-6272.

### FRIDAY, DEC. 19

**Holiday music series**  
Carolers and music groups perform Fridays through Dec. 20 from 2-4 p.m. in Lord & Taylor Court. Santa photos in Fountain Court.  
**Fairlane Town Center.**  
Michigan/Southfield. Dearborn.  
(313) 593-1370.

**Santa photos in the park**  
Santa Claus, poses for children photos Fridays, 5-8 p.m. Saturday and Sunday noon to 5 p.m. in Kellogg Park.  
**Main Street, Plymouth.**  
(313) 453-1540.

### SATURDAY, DEC. 20

**Summit Place Holiday**  
"Is it Christmas Yet?" stories and sing-alongs with Children's Theatre of Michigan, Saturdays and Sundays through Dec. 21 from 4-8 p.m. "Wrens and Roosters" are the strolling carolers.  
**Summit Place, Elizabeth Lake/Telegraph.**  
(248) 682-0123.

### SUNDAY, DEC. 21

**Doll Show**  
Dealers, collectors and artists show and sell new, used, antique and collectible doll, supplies and furniture, 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. Admission \$4 adults, \$1 children.  
**Plymouth Cultural Center.**  
625 Farmer.  
(313) 455-2110.

**Wren's morning**  
Tapper's Jewelry displays the BMW R 1200 cruiser motorcycle from the movie *007 Tomorrow Never Dies* and will raffle an Omega Seamaster watch (\$1,350) during a shopping event for men only 10 a.m. to noon. Free gift wrapping. Continental breakfast served.  
**Orchard Mall.**  
Maple Orchard Lake. West Bloomfield.  
(248) 932-7700.