

Malls & Mainstreets

The Eccentric

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Drug stores change with the times

Rite Aid bought Perry Drugs. CVS recently bought Arbor. When I called Maple Drugs in Westland last week, the person on the other end answered, "Arbor Drugs." And when I called Maple Drugs in Farmington, someone answered "Rite Aid."

SHOPPING CENTERED



DONNA MULCAHY

has owned Lytle Pharmacy on Main Street in downtown Rochester since 1976.

Tim Davidson, owner of Patterson Drugstore on S. Washington Street in Oxford, agreed.

"Certainly, chain pharmacies have been flourishing over the last few decades, especially in Southeastern Michigan, and the number of independent pharmacies has dwindled proportionately," he said.

As a result, these independent pharmacies that still survive do have fewer competitors. However, that's not to say that competing with chain drugstores is a piece of cake. It's not. And the independents must contend with yet another big chain that recently entered Metro Detroit—Walgreens.

"There are really two ways to compete with the big chains," Davidson said. "You can try to be like them and you can try to be different."

Independent pharmacies try to be like the big chains by offering the same or lower prices on prescription and over-the-counter drugs, he said. The independents are able to do that by banding together in large purchasing groups, like Valu-Rite or Serve-All, to get the lowest possible prices from suppliers.

"Of course, a person's co-pay for prescription drugs is the same, no matter where they go, so we can't really be better price-wise there," Lytle said. "But for people who don't have insurance, or those who are buying over-the-counter products, our low prices matter a lot."

The purchasing groups also have helped independent pharmacies also inroads in getting insurance company contracts, Davidson said. Some insurance companies, mainly HMOs and PPOs, tell patients not only what doctors they can see, but what pharmacies they can use.

"We're not just competing for patients that walk in the door, but for insurance contracts, too," Davidson said.

Two ways that independent pharmacies try to be different from the big chains, he said, is by focusing more on customer service and by filling certain niches in the marketplace.

His store's special niches include: renting and selling durable medical equipment (walkers, wheelchairs, etc.), providing some diabetic services, and compounding certain special order prescription medicines from scratch. He also provides free delivery service for shut-ins and people with emergencies.

When it comes to customer service, Lytle and Davidson said, there's one area in particular where their pharmacies tend to outshine the big chains—the length of time it takes to fill prescriptions. Generally, they're able to fill prescriptions faster, because they maintain better staffing levels and computer equipment.

"More and more of my customers are telling me they got fed up with having to wait two hours for a prescription at the big chain stores and that's why they came to me," Lytle said. "Usually, we have people in and out in five minutes."

Lytle and Davidson both said that they try to be active in their communities, that they know many of their customers by name, and that they try to tailor their stores' offerings to the needs of the people in their area.

They also said that they get several letters a year from the big chains, offering to buy them out, but they say they don't want to sell.

Davidson, who bought his pharmacy five years ago from his father-in-law, William Patterson (who owned it since 1964), explained why he feels that way: "Part of it is pride and wanting to be independent. I also feel that competition is good, and that it's of value to customers to have a choice. If there's only one store in town, that would certainly concern me as a patient and consumer."



BY SUSAN DEMAGGIO

Editor

Skin is in. Especially when it's visible under black lace, or through a mesh blouse, or from a thigh-high slit in an evening gown.

The sheer lightness of this season's fabrics, coupled with the intricacies of couture detailing, made the designs in Neiman Marcus's Art of Fashion spring show worth a second look - or a purchase or two.

According to Peg Levandowsky and Doreen LeGray, both of Troy, "The clothes were gorgeous. The colors and fabrics were breathtaking and the simplicity of the designs only added to their elegance."

The Thursday afternoon runway presentation doubled as a benefit for HAVEN, and drew several bursts of applause from the 100 guests who attended the event at the Somerset Collection in Troy.

The show was co-sponsored by Harper's Bazaar magazine and featured in a

special section of the March issue.

The clothing was pulled from the store's own spring collection by Neiman Marcus' regional fashion director Duane Jeffers, and included designs by Giorgio Armani, Richard Tyler, Jil Sander, Jean Paul Gaultier, Escada, St. John and Oscar de la Renta.

"My favorite, were the bias cut jersey dresses," he said. "Their design is so squeaky clean."

Following the show, store manager Mike Lorenz pointed out that his Troy store lends the country in sales of Jil Sander.

"This speaks to the sophistication of our shoppers," he said. "Soon we plan to expand our Jil Sander boutique within the store. Our Armani Black Label selections, too."

Lorenz said several new "surprises" were on the way for Neiman Marcus shoppers.

"We're opening a Bobbi Brown Studio which will be separate from our cosmetics department. We're expanding our modernist collections to include



PHOTOS BY TOM HOFFMEYER
Runway magic: (From left) Gowns by Angel Sanchez, Jean Paul Gaultier, Melinda Eng.

Spring '98 'Art of fashion' is a sheer delight

Dolce & Gabbana. And in April, we'll announce that we'll begin selling the collections of one of the biggest houses in the fashion industry."

Fashion show guests moved to the third level after the show, to find lunch served in rice bowls strategically placed on tables along the couture aisles. Bamboo shoots overflowed jade-colored urns for an East Meets West effect.

"How do you like the presentation?" public relations director Marilyn Connor, asked her guests. "It's all part of the Neiman Marcus mindset that combines tabletop, fashion and entertaining — all the best things that life has to offer."

Show stoppers

- tulle dresses with floral embroidery
- asymmetrical lines at the neck, waist and hem
- slip dresses in layers of mesh and lace
- platform sandals

- sandal flats
- linen
- chiffon
- twinsets
- iridescence
- tank tops
- sarongs
- cargo pants
- ruffles

Contrast:

From the Giorgio Armani Le Collezione, gray and tan plaid coat and charcoal gab pants.



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

MONDAY, MARCH 16

Collection preview

See the Richard Tyler spring group at Nordstrom from 10 a.m. to 7 p.m. with appointments for special orders and fittings. On March 17, see the collection informally modeled from noon to 4 p.m.

Somerset Collection North.
Big Beaver/Coolidge. Troy.
(248) 816-5100, ext. 1350.

Coloring contest

Visit the Customer Service Booth for a coloring sheet featuring a wild and wacky Easter Rabbit. Kids of all ages are invited to color the rabbit for a chance to win a \$50 mall gift certificate. Names randomly drawn on April 13. Winner notified by phone or mail.

Universal Mall, 12 Mile/Dequindre. Warren.
(810) 761-3161.

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 18

Meeting for the hearing impaired

Personalized Hearing Care and the Audiology Department at Garden City Hospital present "Negotiating Life Situations with a Hearing Loss" 1:30 p.m. at MedMax store. Reservations are recommended for this free ongoing series. Repeated Tuesday, March 24 at the MedMax in Taylor.

35337 West Warren. Westland.
(734) 467-6100.

THURSDAY, MARCH 19

Trunk show

See the dazzling evening wear designs of Liancarlo at Ross & Sherman through March 21. Designer's representative Stanley Levine will assist with special orders and fittings.

Bloomfield Plaza. Maple/Telegraph.
(248) 855-8877.

FRIDAY, MARCH 20

Easter Bunny arrival

The "Egstra" special garden at Center Court will be home to photo visits with the Easter Bunny through April 11, during mall hours. Each child who visits will receive a Easter Egg stuffed with a surprise. Digital photos available from \$9.99 to \$39.50.

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

ADDED ATTRACTIONS

DKNY Seminar

Hudson's hosts Irene Jorgenson of DKNY with the spring line at 12:30 p.m. Seating limited. Complimentary box lunch provided. Reservations required. Level Two.

Somerset Collection North.
Big Beaver/Coolidge. Troy.
(248) 816-4559.

SATURDAY, MARCH 21

Spring fashion show

See the latest colors and silhouettes from the mall's leading retailers representing the best in European and American designs from both sides of The Collection.

Complimentary seating, 1 p.m.

Somerset Collection South Rotunda.

Big Beaver/Coolidge. Troy.
(248) 643-6360.

Easter Bunny arrival

Kids of all ages are invited to JC Penney Court to welcome the Easter Bunny at 11 a.m. after a magic show performed by Bill and Di Schuler. Photos and bunny visits follow through April 11. Free.

Westland Center/Wayne/Warren.
(313) 425-5001.

Kids fashion show

Nordstrom hosts a continental breakfast at 8:30 a.m. followed by a casual/holiday runway show of the latest spring children's clothes at 9 a.m. Cost is \$10 per person. Reservations required.

Somerset Collection North.

Big Beaver/Coolidge. Troy.
(248) 816-5100, ext. 1690.

Arthur visits

Hudson's hosts PBS character Arthur the Aardvark from noon to 3 p.m. in the Children's Department for visits and photos (bring your own camera.) Arthur will visit Hudson's Summit Place store in Waterford on March 22 from noon to 3 p.m.

Twelve Oaks, 12 Mile/Novi.
(248) 344-6800.

Super Model visits

Meet Polo model Tyson Beckford during a special autograph session at the grand re-opening of Hudson's Polo Ralph Lauren shops at the Northland Center (noon to 1 p.m. Main Floor) and Oakland Mall (3-4 p.m. Lower

Level) stores.

(248) 697-2200.

Spring program for kids

"The World Beyond The Garden," a show by the Children's Theatre of Michigan, performed free on Grand Court stage, 11:30 a.m. 3:30 and 5:30 p.m. A different story on Sunday, March 22 at 1 and 3 p.m. Visits with the spring bunny Nestor Fairweather, begin March 28 through April 11. Polaroid courtesy of the mall for \$10 each.

Somerset Collection North.

Big Beaver/Coolidge. Troy.
(248) 816-5484.

Kitty Cat Adoptions

The Backdoor Friends cat shop is sponsoring cat adoptions from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. The cats come from the Purebred Cat Rescue, they are tested and ready for adoption.

Mirrored Shopping Center.

Grand River/Dreke/Farmington Hills.
(248) 442-0940.

Characters visit

FAO Schwarz welcomes Hello Kitty and Keroppi the Frog from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. The first 200 guests receive a complimentary gift.

Somerset Collection North.

Big Beaver/Coolidge. Troy.
(248) 643-4554.

SUNDAY, MARCH 22

Puppet Show

Enter the Maak Puppet Theatre's magic world where sunflowers sing to vegetarian monsters. 2 p.m. Free show.

Borders Books, 30995 Orchard Lake.

Farmington Hills.
(248) 737-0110.

Book signing

Meet Stephanie Mellen from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. Waldenbooks, 30200 Plymouth, Livonia.

(734) 261-7811.

MONDAY, MARCH 23

Advance fashion show

Join Hudson's for a cutting-edge fashion show with designs from DKNY for Men, Lola and Max Studio. 6:30 a.m. cocktail reception. From 7:30-8 p.m. the runway show. 8 p.m. dancing and dessert. Tickets, \$26, benefit Funclub Foundation for the Arts.

Majestic Theatre, Detroit.

(248) 988-0-FAN.