

Malls & Mainstreets

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Hare styles: These little gems are at Pier 1 Imports, from \$3.

Funny bunnies hop into baskets at Eastertime

Hippity hoppity, Easter's on its way, April 12! If you've been hunting for things to put in kids' baskets, here are some ideas:

At the top of the list are Ty Beanie Babies. These soft, bean-filled critters are as popular as ever with boys and girls of all ages — even adults collect them. They won't rot teeth and make great stand-alone gifts or Easter basket fillers.

Un-retired Beanie Babies cost \$5 to \$7 each, depending on where you shop and if you can find them at all (stores tend to sell out faster than shipments arrive).



DONNA MULCAHY

I recently found them for \$5.99 at the Country Peddler, Livonia Mall, for \$6 at Jacobson's and at the F&M on Middlebelt in Livonia.

Beanie Babies are collectors' items because Ty, the company that makes them, retires each one after a while. But the animals lose their value if their red and gold, heart-shaped tags are missing or damaged, so never cut them off. You can buy clear plastic tag protectors for about 25-cents each at most stores that sell Beanie Babies.

Encore makes a line of pastel-colored, bean-bag animals called Precious Moments Tender Tails. Some of the animals have already been retired. I found them for \$7 each at McDovitt's Hallmark at Laurel Park Place in Livonia. Other Hallmarks carry them, too.

You can find bean-bag dolls of animated Disney characters at The Disney Store, for \$6 each, some Warner Brothers characters at Jacobson's for \$7 each, Rugrats and Sesame Street characters at Crowley's for about \$6 each, and a variety of bean-bag dolls at Target, \$2.99 and up.

Just be careful about giving a bean-filled doll to any child under 3, because the beans could spill out and a child could choke on them, if the doll develops even a tiny tear.

If BeanieBuns aren't your bag, then how about giving your child a famous bunny in the form of a book or stuffed animal. I know of seven (besides the Easter Bunny).

There's Bugs Bunny, Winnie-the-Pooh's friend Rabbit, Buster the popular "Arthur" books and PBS TV show, and the bunnies in the famous children's books, "The Velveteen Rabbit," "The Runaway Bunny," "Pat the Bunny," and "Guess How Much I Love You." Look for these books at your favorite book store.

Try the Warner Bros. Studio Store for Bugs Bunny stuffed animals and The Disney Store for Pooh's Rabbit. I found Buster, Velveteen Rabbit and "Pat the Bunny" stuffed animals in the children's department at Hudson's, and big "Runaway Bunny" stuffed animals for \$15 at Target.

At B. Dalton Books you can buy the mother and baby bunny from "Guess How Much I Love You" for \$12.99 a pair, with the purchase of the hardcover version of that book, which sells for \$15.99.

At Target you can also get: Bunny Babies dolls by children's photographer Anne Geddes (photos of infants in bunny costumes), \$19.99 each; Hot Wheels or Match Box cars for under \$1; Easter Egg Hunt Barbie & Kelly, \$19; and a six-pack of egg-shaped sidewalk chalk by RoseArt for \$2.99.

You can buy a girl's handbag at Sears (\$6 and up) and fill it with your child's favorite candy. (Now you can get big Reese's or Butterfinger chocolate bunnies! Mmm.)

Most Hallmark stores sell Easter or springtime lapel pins, \$2.95 to \$4.95; Snowbunnies collectible figurines by Dept. 56, \$18 and up; and WJD (What Would Jesus Do?) woven, friendship bracelets for \$1.50.

New shoe stores open around town



Because North Americans spend almost \$18 billion dollars each year on footwear, it comes as no surprise that shoe stores are popping up all over, and remain one of mall owners' most lucrative tenants.

Three new shoe retailers are opening stores in Michigan — Columbus-based Magnifete, Chicago-based Chernin's Shoes and Nashville-based Jarman's Shoes.

For the 91-year-old Chernin's, their first store outside the Chicago market opens April 4 at the Novi Town Center, a second is planned for The Oakland Plaza in Troy in May.

Chernin's sells name brand shoes for every member of the family from manufacturers Kenneth Cole, Johnston & Murphy, Hush Puppies, Timberland, Rockport, Stride Rite, Nike, Adidas, Fila, Skechers, Vans, Nunn Bush and Florsheim.

Magnifete, opening at Fairlane Town Center in Dearborn, specializes in plac-

ing hard-to-fit customers with easy-to-find shoe sizes — 9 to 14 for women, and 11 to 19 for men, in a range of widths — narrow to wide.

Magnifete will carry more than 100 styles of both dress and casual footwear from 50 name brand manufacturers who usually sold these larger sizes by special order only.

Magnifete is a division of Shoe Corporation of America, based in Columbus, Ohio, which operates leased shoe departments in more than 500 department stores nationwide.

CEO Dennis Tishkoff is pioneering this new concept of shoe selling, crediting baby boomers for the niche.

A significant — and growing — percentage of the adult marketplace



Eureka! Hard-to-fit shoe shoppers will find their "odd sizes" the specialty at Magnifete in the Fairlane Town Center.

requires larger shoe sizes and widths," he said. "These men and women have either sacrificed comfort for style or style for comfort. They've paid inflated prices for custom service or ordered from catalogs only to find the shoe they bought did not look or fit as they expected."

"Magnifete will have these large shoe sizes in stock with trained fitters on hand to insure they fit comfortably and

affordably."

Jarman Shoes, recently opened at Northland Center in Southfield, Summit Place Mall in Waterford, Fairlane Town Center and Eastland, sells casual, dress and athletic shoes for men, but draws a fair share of fashion-forward women, who buy Jarman shoes for the unisex look. Jarman is a division of the Jenesco Corp.

Resale clothier finds the world is her oyster

BY AMY MESSANO
SPECIAL WRITER

If you dream of owning an Armani suit or drool when you see Joan and David shoes (but know you can't afford them), think again.

Nicole's Revival in Westland could be your best bet for a hassle-free, easy-on-the-checkbook shopping spree. You could walk away with your very first pair of Ferragamo shoes, but you must be willing to pick through racks of "gently used" upscale clothing and accessories.

Store owner, Nicole Christ, 27, who credits God for her energy and success, has carved out a niche for her shop through years of hard work and aggressive, innovative marketing ideas.

That perseverance is paying off in the form of national exposure. Besides being mentioned on the Crook and Chase cable TV show, *Moneyworth* magazine named Nicole's Revival "one of the best high-end consignment stores in the U.S."

Nicole's Revival draws shoppers and suppliers from West Bloomfield, Clarkston, Royal Oak and Livonia — savvy customers who know how to make their fashion dollars stretch.

The store is the largest reseller of men's apparel in Michigan and the third largest in the country.

Nicole's men's section has everything from golf and cigar accessories to Hermes ties and Armani suits. And that suits Gloria Schneider of Westland, just fine. She's picked up a couple of those suits for her husband.

Schneider, an addicted Nicole's shopper, has been coming to the store since it opened five years ago and has found lots of treasures along the way.

Her favorite, a \$300 pair of Chanel shoes she got for \$80. "I've come a long way since I started coming here," Schneider said. "Nicole will help me find whatever I need. She even sent me to a good hairdresser."

Schneider, decked out in bargains from the store, Chanel sunglasses, Bernini earrings, a leather Kenneth

Cole purse and a Donna Karan top (she got it for \$8) has even converted her daughter and husband to resale shoppers.

"Nicole knows her regular customers and she'll call me when something arrives in my size that she knows I'll like," Schneider said. She admits to leaving the store with garbage bags full of goodies.

The best bargain Renee Williams of Inkster can recall is a \$4,000 Stephen Yeager gown she bought for \$150.

"Nicole makes the difference," Williams said. "Not only does she have a great variety of sizes and styles, but she genuinely wants to help her customers."

Christ goes the extra mile for her customers from fashion shows that feature models of different ages, shapes and sizes, to a newsletter, a website (www.nicolesrevival.com) and "resale party nights" available to groups of 10 or more complete with refreshments and discounts.

For customers who spend \$500 in one trip to Nicole's, the next visit will be in a chauffeured limousine that will pick up and drop off customers from any location. "I have customers from Ohio and Canada and if that's where the limo needs to go, then that's where it will go," said Christ.

The most popular resale activity that Christ coordinates for her customers are resale bus tours.

For \$35, bargain hunters enjoy a continental breakfast with an informal fashion show, a box lunch of your choice, coupons and appetizers while browsing.

Christ said the tours are "fun-filled days and a great way to meet people and find some great bargains."

Nicole recently expanded her tours to include resale shops in Chicago. She's even planning a European resale tour that will hit Paris and London.

Christ got the idea while e-mailing other resale store owners in Europe. She just returned from a scouting mission to check out possible shopping sites.

"I'm so excited about the idea," Christ beamed. The European tour is still in the planning stages, but she hopes to take 20 to 30 people and to keep the cost to less than \$1,000.

"I love this kind of shopping," said Gloria Schneider. "This is my sport."

And if you're a serious bargain hunter, this may be the shopping safari you've been waiting for.

Nicole's Revival, 958 N. Newburgh Road, Westland.

(734) 729-1234.



What a deal: Nicole Christ believes in resale and has built a successful retail career networking with sources and customers across metro Detroit and overseas.

Beauty at the Oscars is in the eye of the beholder

Am I getting old? Are you? Do you look at the latest crop of "actresses" and ask yourself "Who is that?"

I certainly did while watching the 70th anniversary of the Academy Awards on Monday evening (and Tuesday morning).

Are you shocked that on the same stage with 70 years of Oscar winners, including Anne Bancroft, Luise Rainer, Tereza Wright, and Shelly Winters, they ask Neve Campbell to be a presenter. Okay, she looked presentable.

But for Ashley Judd (the less said about that dress the better), and Drew Barrymore (daisies in the hair; sleeveless dress-let's hit the gym, Drew) to present, and Cloris Leachman, Shirley Temple and Kathy Bates to be presented as "oldies but goodies" — something is terribly wrong.

Now that I get that off my chest, let's talk about the most important event of the evening... how they looked!

Chor: We know how patriotic she is, but did she really have to come as the Statue of Liberty (such an attractive look on a 61-year-old)?

Eva Marie Saint: Now this is how a star should look. The hair, makeup, the elegance. Understatement is everything! (Did you hear that Madonna

and Ms. Winslet?)

Linda Hamilton: Amazing that the wife of James "Titanic" Cameron arrived at the Oscars with clippies in her hair! What was she thinking?

Minnie Driver: Superb! Everything worked. She is 5'11", the hair, the dress... everything was in proportion!

Faye Dunaway: Magnificent. The makeup was classic, the hair just right. Here is a true "star."

Sigourney Weaver: Tell her that Prada designs for refugees, not the classy actress that she is.

Helena Bonham Carter, Judi Dench, Gloria Stuart, Julianne Moore: All were wonderful examples of how women of various ages should look.

Angelica Huston: A classic beauty. But it is time for a change of look (perhaps shorter, lighter hair that flatters her magnificent bone structure?)

And the winners are:

• **Best Makeup:** A tie. Anastasia's singer Allen. Everything worked... the makeup was flawless, the hair divine. Marlee Matlin — What a beautiful young woman! The hair was ideal on a perfectly featured face... A great improvement. Obviously marriage has worked wonders for Marlee, since she no longer "lives" behind the glasses and hair.

• **All Around Perfection:** The unique Sharon Stone. When I worked for Ann-Margret, she took great pride in telling her friends she "worked with the best in the biz. Hair, makeup, style." Obviously that belief has been passed on to Ms. S. Have you ever seen her looking 100-percent? And a smart cookie as well. Superb! This is the future of Hollywood glamour (for proof of that, shall we not discuss Frances MacDormand?)

• **Most Improved Hair:** Michael Bolton. Nuff said.

• **Most Beautiful Woman in the World:** Who amongst us has not been in love with Julie Christie at some time in our lives? Pardon me while I gush. If I had to pick one woman in cinema who represents exactly what I believe a woman should look like, it's Ms. Christie. That face! That profile! Yikes!

I know that many of you disagree with the above, but all it represents is my opinion and you are certainly entitled to yours. While I'm at it, one more parting shot...

Am I alone in believing that Judi Dench and Robert Duvall were robbed? Did you see "Mrs. Brown" or "The Apostle"? Don't miss them.

I would like to hear from you personally. I promise to answer. You may reach me at 1-800-944-6583 to find out if I am going to be appearing in your neck of the woods in April or May. My new web site is: jeffreybruce.com, and if you care to "e" mail me, please do so at jubb@worldnet.att.net

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