



**Sole treats:** Mephisto led the trail to fitness footwear.

## Fitness shoes keep the beat

Finding the right kind of walking shoe can be down right confusing, because there are so many different types on the market. There are shoes for fitness walkers, casual strollers, people who both run and walk, people who trek on dirt roads, and for hikers with backpacks.

To try to make sense of it all, I talked with salespeople at The Walking Company and Track 'N Trail at Somerset North in Troy, Easy Spirit Shoe Store at Laurel Park Place in Livonia, and at Naturalizer Shoes at Westland Mall.

For casual, every day walking, you should have a toe box that's high and wide, to let the toes spread naturally and prevent problems such as bunions. The shoes also should be flexible, lightweight and have good arch and heel support.

Better shoes have a polyurethane (PU) sole, which wears longer than an ethyl vinyl acetate (EVA) sole. For fitness walking, you should have all of the above. Plus, the shoe should have a little stiffer midsole, shock absorbent material in the heel, and a rebound system to add spring to your step.

Running shoes tend to have more cushion and less support than walking shoes. Walking shoes need the extra support because a person's foot is on the ground longer when he's walking than when he's running. However, there are combination shoes that try to meet the needs of both runners and walkers.

Casual walking and fitness walking are generally meant for paved roads and sidewalks. But the new trend is for people to head off-road, said Melissa Sterner, manager of Track 'N Trail. For light trekking, she advised, look for a shoe that has all of the elements of a good walking shoe, plus a stiffer midsole, so that if you step on a rock, it won't bruise your foot. The shoe also should be lined with a material that wicks away moisture.

For mountain hiking, look for boots that have a steel shank, to give you added support and protection. That's especially important if you're carrying a back pack or other additional weight. A lot of hiking boots are lined with Gore-Tex, which allows moisture to permeate out of, but not into, the boot.

Track 'N Trail also has a collection at Twelve Oaks, Novi, and specializes in casual, light trekking and hiking boots for men and women. The price range for light trekking shoes is \$70 to \$130. Other brands carried: Vasque, Salomon, Timberland, Nike, Asolo, Technica and Timberland.

The Walking Company carries dress, casual dress and walking shoes for men and women, as well as shirts and walking accessories like wooden walking sticks. Some of the shoe brands it carries are Ecco, Ryka, Arin, Clarks and Mephisto.

The top of the line walking shoe, made by Mephisto, contains an Air Bag System and costs about \$240, a salesperson said. The shoe has a foam latex insole that molds to the shape of the foot, but doesn't break down. Under the heel are little green balls filled with air, which help absorb shock and return energy to the step.

Easy Spirit Shoe Store, which sells only Easy Spirit shoes for women, also has stores at Somerset North, Oakland Mall and Fairlane Town Center in Dearborn. Its new fitness collection of walking, running, and combination walking-running shoes features "anti-gravity technology." The insoles contain millions of shock-absorbent micro-bubbles, which lift pounds and pounds of pressure from your feet with every step you take. They cost about \$79 a pair.

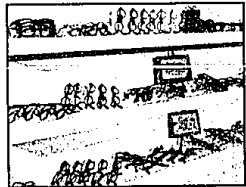
Naturalizer Shoes carries Naturalizer dress and casual shoes and NaturalSPORT brand fitness shoes for women. The fitness shoes cost about \$49.95 to \$64.90. Naturalizer also has stores at Oakland Mall, Twelve Oaks, Westland Center, Southfield, and Livonia Mall.

## Value is in vogue at eyewear boutique

You'll See. If you want cutting-edge fashion eye wear at half the price of most designer frames, stop in at the new See store in downtown Birmingham.

A prototype project by Richard S. Golden of D.O.C. fame, the optical shop handles German- and Italian-made eye glass frames imported from European factories with the new "See" brand label.

"We've bypassed all the middlemen to give our customers reverse sticker shock," said the Sexy Specs man. "The price on the stickers (\$139-\$199) includes the frames and lenses. There are no hidden extras. This is the first real innovation in the eyewear industry since 1979 when



the One-Hour Super Store was introduced and people no longer had to wait a week for new glasses."

Golden said the idea to offer hip, high-fashion frames at almost wholesale prices came from his wife Shelley and his brother Randy. They're targeting the young Generation X consumer by providing value-merchandise in a boutique designed to "feel like a living room." In fact, a bowl of Granny Smith apples sits on one of the table tops in the store which is furnished in the newly popular Mission-style.

Golden discussed his pricing strategy. "Because we're not paying the big name designers like Armani, Ralph Lauren and Calvin Klein their high fees, and because we're not ordering from manu-

facturer representatives who also charge fees, we can get these glasses to our customers at great prices.

"Of course, there are still those folks who must have the Armani label, and so there are plenty of high-end optical stores which carry these frames. But, now you know why they must charge the prices they do."

See opened last month and when all the "bugs" are worked out, the Golden plan to open See boutiques in New York, Chicago, Boston, Aspen, and Palm Beach.

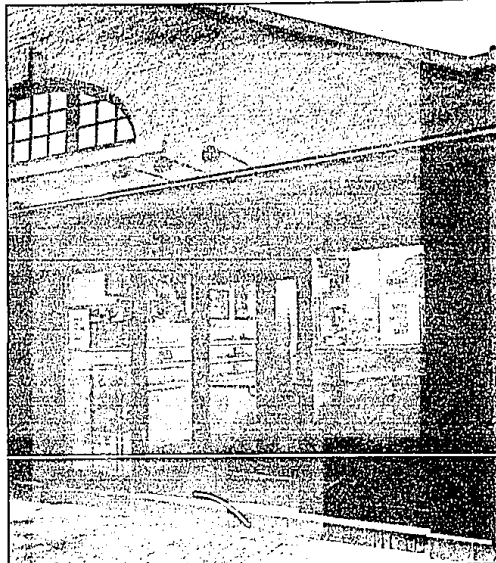
"It's all part of the Back To Basics movement," Golden said as he walked about the shop chatting with customers and even posing for a photo with a young couple who recognized him from his D.O.C. commercials. "We want our customers to feel at home, browse around and try on the merchandise. Nothing is behind locked doors. The selection is streamlined, simple. Shoppers will realize they're getting a deal here, a bargain in eye wear."

Golden said plastic or polycarbonate frames are the rage right now, as designers move away from the wire (metal) frames of past seasons. Lime green, apple red and lemon yellow colored frames line the shelves at See, as do frames of off-beat materials, tortoise shell and wire. The shop also sells custom eyeglass accessories in wood and laminate.

The frames are selected by Golden staff from collections offered by European factories. Once the frames pass the Golden's specs, they are affixed with a See label. The glasses all come with a one-year warranty.

Golden said many customers have entered his store complaining about the high prices for lenses frames and optical visits. He noted that many components contribute to the price of a pair of glasses including the quality of the plastic, the hinges and metal weight used in the finished product. Add a designer label, and you've doubled that price.

See is located at 160 Old South Woodward, Birmingham. (248) 723-1900. An optometrist is available Thursdays and Saturdays.



**Storefront style:** The new See optical boutique welcomes shoppers inside with its clean architecture.

## Discounter is opening

Costco opens its first membership warehouse clubs in metro Detroit on Friday, May 1, at 8 a.m.

The warehouses are at 13700 Middlebelt Road and 20000 Hayger Road in Livonia, 2343 South Telegraph in Bloomfield, 30550 Stephenson Highway in Madison Heights and 27118 Gratiot Avenue in Roseville. Each will employ approximately 160 people.

Costco's offers name brand and private-label merchandise at substantially lower prices than can be found through conventional wholesale sources.

Costco's warehouses are primarily designed to help small- to medium-sized businesses reduce costs in purchasing for resale and for everyday business supplies. They also offer a wide range of merchandise for business and personal use.

Featured departments will include fresh meat and expanded produce, an in-house fresh bakery, gourmet deli, prescription pharmacy, optical department, tire installation center, one hour photo processing, rotisserie chicken and a food court.

"We have one mission," said CEO

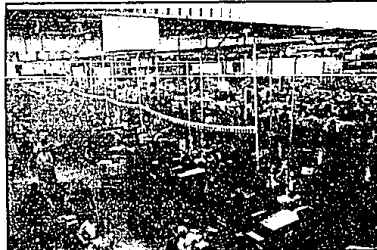
Jim Sinegal, "to sell top quality merchandise to our members at the lowest possible prices."

The company is able to do this by eliminating many of the costly overhead expenses faced by traditional retailers and wholesalers, like fancy display cases, sales people, advertising, billing.

Costco (created in 1993 by the merger of Costco Wholesale, founded 1983, and the Price Club, founded 1976) is a pioneer in the \$35 billion membership warehouse club industry. After paying a nominal fee to join, Costco members can shop at low warehouse prices for national name brand merchandise such as Kodak, James River Kraft, American Tourister, 3M, Ray Ban, Michelin, Makita, Disney, IBM, Microsoft and hundreds more.

Costco is open to Costco members only. All businesses, licensed professionals and members of qualified groups are eligible to join. The annual membership fee is \$36 for business members and \$40 for individual members of qualified groups. Both types of membership include a free additional spouse card.

**Cost is boss:** At Costco Warehouse Clubs, shoppers enjoy savings in a no-frills environment. Memberships are required.



**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.**

### SUNDAY, APRIL 26

**Weaving demonstration**  
See an array of North American Indian products, plus a Chilkat Weaving Demonstration by Joyce Tinkham, noon to 5 p.m.

**Woodland Indians Garden & Gallery.**  
Six Mile between Inkster/Beech Daly. (313) 387-5930.

**Art displays**  
Kingsbury School students display their artistic talents throughout the mall through May 2. Additionally, Pontiac/Oakland Society of Artists displays through May 6.

**Meadow Brook Village Mall.**  
Adams/Walton, Rochester Hills. (248) 375-2878.

**Collector toy show**  
10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Admission \$2. Kids under 12, free. Tables with collectible and die-cast toys, model car kits, promos, action figures, sci-fi, Matchbox, Hotwheels much more. Sponsored by Winross Collectors Club of America. Toy raffle every half-hour.

**K of C Hall, 19801 Farmington, Livonia.**  
(734) 747-7192.  
**Beanie baby show**  
Exhibit and sale 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. Admission \$4. Kids 4-12 years, \$2. Dealers and collectors sell new releases and retired pieces.

**Plymouth Cultural Center, 526 Farmen.**  
(734) 455-2110.

### MONDAY, APRIL 27

**Health-O-Rama**  
United Health Organization sponsors free and low cost health screening tests and services 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. through April 28.  
**Tel-Twelve Mall, 12 Mile/Telegraph.**  
(248) 353-4111.

## ADDED ATTRACTIONS

### THURSDAY, APRIL 30

**Sixties icon visits**  
Meet Wavy Gravy telling tales about the life and times of The Grateful Dead to promote Hudson's new Grateful Dead Leisure Wear Line. He'll sign photographs. Percentage of sales from clothing line goes to camp fund for homeless children. 5-7 p.m. Men's Accessories, Lower Level.

**Oakland Mall, 14 Mile/John R. Troy.**  
(248) 697-2200.

**Student Art Exhibit**  
Orchard Lake Middle School students display and sell various works through May 28 at Objects of Art. Proceeds to Pontiac Rescue Mission. Items include jewelry, clay, paintings, drawings and sculptures.

**Sugar Tree Plaza, 6243 Orchard Lake.**  
West Bloomfield. (248) 539-3332.

### FRIDAY, MAY 1

**Duchess visits**  
Sarah, Duchess of York, tells her weight loss story along with Florine Mark, CEO of Weight Watchers, 1-2 p.m. Center Court. Also testimonials by other weight loss experts who have shed 100 pounds or more.

**Twelve Oaks, 12 Mile/Novi. Novi.**  
(248) 348-9432.

**Jewelry retrospective**  
Hudson's hosts exhibit of illustrations from Carole's "The Pearl Book," featuring the hottest pearl styles from the last 25 years, through May 10.

**Somerset Collection North.**  
Big Beaver/Coolidge. Troy. (248) 616-0000.

**Estate jewelry sale**  
Neilman Marcus hosts collection of one-of-a-kind Art Deco, Art Nouveau and late Victorian designs

through May 9 from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.  
**Somerset Collection South.**  
Big Beaver/Coolidge. Troy. (248) 643-3300.

### SATURDAY, MAY 2

**Mall concert**  
Mercurys perform 1 p.m. west end of mall. Group has 36-year tradition of entertaining in the area.

**Livonia Mall, Seven Mile/Middlebelt.**  
(248) 476-1160.

**Plymouth Farmer's Market**

Saturdays May 2 through October 24 from 7:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. Fresh produce, flowers and plants, baked goods, seasonal items.

**Across from Kellogg Park: Main/Ann Arbor Trail.**

(734) 453-1540.

**Beauty treatments**

Salon Legato hosts Joseph of Phytologie offering complimentary hair and scalp treatments.

**33318 Grand River Farmington.**

(248) 442-9999.

**Artist visits**

James Labadie customizes handpainted scarves, noon to 4 p.m. at Kathryn Scott.

**148 Pierce, Birmingham.**

(248) 642-3064.

### SUNDAY, MAY 3

**Law Fair Day**  
Free legal advice for families, sponsored by Oakland County Bar Association with more than 100 volunteers on hand. Booths, displays and law-related demonstrations.

**Tel-Twelve Mall, 12 Mile/Telegraph, Southfield.**

(248) 353-4111.

### MONDAY, MAY 4

**Senior dance**  
Great fun and exercise for senior citizens 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. Music, dancing and refreshments. Newcomers welcome.

**Westland Center: Wayne/Warren.**

(313) 425-5001.