

## Let your personal style guide fashion decisions

### SHOP TALK



NICOLE STAFFORD

Enough now. We've all heard the fashion reports for spring and summer.

And, since the season has officially arrived, we're probably ready to make a few purchases. No, that's I wish I said - a few purchases.

Though retailers and designers would like to think differently, most of us have a limit on the number of times we'll turn over our credit cards for an addition to the wardrobe, especially when the new piece falls under the category "trendy." In my opinion, that's particularly the case in the Midwest. We don't necessarily salivate over the so-called hottest and latest fashion.

We're more conservative than that. We sit back and wait like scientists. How long will the trend survive? If I wait a few months, will I be able to take advantage of the trend more inexpensively? Is that trend really for me?

Besides, most of us don't spend thousands of dollars overhauling our wardrobes simply because they're not brimming with certain colors, fabrics and patterns. We take stock of our choices and make purchases in light of our needs and budget.

With that in mind, I decided to weigh in on some of the trends we've been hearing so much about.

**COLORS**  
While vibrant, bright colors like hot pink, turquoise and orange are being touted as the shades of the season, neutral tones like black, navy, white and tan are being ignored.

On the one hand, I do believe beautiful colors should be cherished and experienced, especially when they positively affect our mood and appearance. However, I don't believe we should abandon our black separates in favor of an all-color wardrobe. Not only does that fly in the face of building a wardrobe, but also many of us simply don't feel comfortable and at our best in such bold colors.

More importantly, not every color complements every person. In other words, don't feel pressured to inject loads of color into your wardrobe. Buy a few pieces - a top and a skirt - in your favorite bright tone and wear it with the neutral items you already have. Or, purchase an inexpensive hat, pair of shoes or handbag in a bright tone that you know you'll wear.

**REPTILE PATTERNS**  
If you especially like reptile patterns and they suit you to a tee, by all means buy as much as you'd like. You'll probably wear your purchases next year, whether they're still in style or no. But, that's because they suit you.

Otherwise, I'd cross reptile, both faux and real, off your shopping list. Obviously, the real deal can be expensive. More importantly, reptile prints have a very particular sensibility. They're sexy, yes, but they're tough and bold, too. And, if that isn't your style, why dilute the look you have.

While a pair of shoes or a handbag in a reptile pattern wouldn't strain the budget, I'm not convinced a small dose would have much impact, not anymore than, for example, a high-quality, leather bag you'll use for years to come.

**LOGOS**  
Personally, I detest logos and, except for jeans, won't purchase clothing emblazoned by them. To me, they are the antithesis of style, a substitute for interesting details and good design.

Once more, they seem to suggest the wearer lacks his or her own sense of style and must rely on others for guidance.

**POLKA DOTS AND Gingham**  
Like plaid, these prints don't really go out of style. Gingham, in particular, always looks appealing and comfortable in the summer. And, a small polka dot print on a lightweight skirt or dress is a classic summer look.

As with all prints, the issues are personal preference, size and proportion. If you like either of these prints, find one that works for you.

**CHIFFON**  
I think the chiffon dresses you're seeing are beautiful. My only recommendation - find one that you can wear in both casual and formal settings. Look for a chiffon dress you could wear to a wedding with fine jewelry and slip on with a pair of sandals for an afternoon picnic.

## All in the family

### Retailer offers way to celebrate puppy love during Easter



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A bag of gourmet dog bones from a bakery.

A cozy set of knit booties to protect the paws.

A leather collar in pooch's favorite color.

Dogs have long been members of the family. It's how we're confirming their status that's changed, making for big business in retail.

Indeed, anything we might purchase or do for our children, we want for Spot, too, especially if we have the disposable income.

That's why the owners of Three Dog Bakery, one at 223 E. Maple in downtown Birmingham and the other at 413 Main Street in downtown Rochester, decided to hire a pet photographer, arm an actor in a bunny suit with a load of dog treats and offer Easter portrait sittings in April.

"It was kind of a supply and demand thing," said Nora Potthoff, co-owner of the two specialty stores, part of a chain that started 10 years ago as one bakery in Kansas. The local stores, which primarily sell dog treats, have received numerous requests for similar photo opportunities from customers.

Sitings: noon-4 p.m. Sunday, April 16 at the Rochester store and 5-9 p.m. Thursday, April 20 at the Birmingham store, the sittings will be similar to those held by the retailer in December.

While walk-ins will be accepted, appointments are encouraged. The cost, \$12 per sheet of photos, will benefit local animal welfare efforts.

Rick Dupler, the photographer hired by Potthoff and her business partner for dog before making a selection for print. He'll also offer a variety of photo sizes, including the kind that fits into your wallet, and several holiday borders commemorating Easter.

"We treat animals much like we treat our children," said Potthoff of the current demand for pet products and services.

While many shoppers scoff at the sight of some of Three Dog Bakery's merchandise - decorated birthday cakes for dogs, baby books for puppies and an assortment of freshly wrapped dog treats, from "Pit-Fours" to "Pawlines" - most end up making a purchase.

"Something just clicks, and it makes them laugh and feel good. ... And, there's not a lot out there that makes us feel good," said Potthoff, adding that her stores will begin selling cat treats similar to what they have for dogs this month.

For those couples and individuals who don't have children, patronizing Three Dog Bakery is an outlet for maternal and paternal feelings, said Potthoff. "And, there are a lot of couples who are choosing not to have children."

Besides, pets, especially dogs, are



**Dog days:** Nora Potthoff (left), co-owner of Three Dog Bakery in Birmingham and Rochester where Easter dog portraits will be offered later this month, and store associate Audrey Metro tempt Roudy, the Birmingham store's resident dog, with a homemade treat.

more amenable than children when it comes to acts of bonding and association. "We give (children) toys, we dress them, but dogs tend to be much more compliant," Potthoff joked, explaining that pets almost always serve as an extension for our personalities.

That's why, in truth, most of the merchandise and services we purchase for our pets we're actually buying for ourselves, she said.

So, though Spot may seem overjoyed when you walk in the door with a new box of dog treats, that's probably your perception. After all, until he tastes his new treats, he can't really appreciate them. Not to mention, only dogs know how they feel about collar scarves, winter booties and portrait sittings.

"It just makes you feel good," said Potthoff. "And, you want to indulge (your pets) as much as you can because they give you so much."



**Tricks and toys:** Photographer Rick Dupler will offer several photo sizes and different holiday borders to customers who bring their dogs to Three Dog Bakery for Easter portraits. And, he'll have a supply of dog treats and toys on hand to coax his subjects. Cost of the photos, \$12 per sheet, will benefit local animal welfare efforts.

### Pooch portraits

**What:** Photos of your dog with the Easter Bunny

**Where:** Three Dog Bakery stores at 413 Main Street in downtown Rochester and 223 E. Maple in downtown Birmingham

**When:** Noon-4 p.m. Sunday, April 16 in Rochester and 5-9 p.m. Thursday, April 20 in Birmingham

**Cost:** \$12 per sheet of photos with portion of proceeds benefiting local animal welfare efforts

**Appointments:** Call (248) 608-8877 or (248) 723-1582

## ADDED ATTRACTIONS

Living event through April 13, 10 a.m.-6 p.m., Food Court. For more information, call (734) 622-4100.

**CHANEL MAKEOVERS**  
Receive a makeover by a Chanel national makeup artist at Jacobson's, Laurel Park Place in Livonia through April 12, noon-7 p.m., Cosmetics department. To make an appointment, call (734) 591-7696.

**JONES NEW YORK EVENT**  
Hudson's, Twelve Oaks Mall in Novi, hosts a wardrobe seminar featuring spring pieces by Jones New York, 7 p.m. To make a reservation, call (248) 434-8800.

**THURSDAY, APRIL 13**

**AUSTIN REED WORKSHOP**  
Jacobson's stores offers wardrobe seminars featuring clothing by Austin Reed through April 15, 11 a.m.-3 p.m. Dates and locations are as follows: April 13 at Rochester Hills store; April 14 at Birmingham store and April 15 at Laurel Park Place store in Livonia. For more information, call (800) 837-5227.

**USED BOOK SALE**  
The League of Women Voters holds a used book sale at Wonderland Mall in Livonia through April 16, near Dunham's. For details, call (734) 622-4100.

### FRIDAY, APRIL 14

**MOONLIGHT MADNESS SALE**  
The Plymouth Community Chamber of Commerce sponsors Moonlight Madness in downtown Plymouth, 7-11 p.m. For details, call (734) 453-1640.

**PROM DAY**  
Saks Fifth Avenue, the Somerset Collection in Troy, presents From 2000 Focus Day a showcase of evening wear, complimentary makeovers by Stilla and a drawing for prom services and merchandise. Evening Collections, second floor. For details, call (248) 614-3385.

**FASHION DAY AT HUDSON'S**  
Hudson's, Somerset Collection in Troy, presents three fashion shows: looks from the Women's Way Department at 11 a.m., a rundown of spring trends at 2 p.m. and the Ralph Lauren collection for juniors at 4 p.m. Reservations are required. Please call (248) 616-4605.

**HANDRA DESIGNER VISITS**  
Handbag designer Maya Evangelista and a trunk show of her collection come to Jacobson's in downtown Birmingham, 10 a.m.-4 p.m. Handbags department. For more information, call (248) 644-0900.

**SWING THE NIGHT AWAY**  
Wonderland Mall in Livonia offers free swing dance lessons, 6-9 p.m., Food Court. For additional information, call (734) 622-4100.

**Retail, style and special store events are listed in this column. Please send information to: Malls & Mainstreets, c/o Observer & Eccentric Newspapers, 805 East Maple, Birmingham, MI 48009. Fax: (248) 644-1314. Information must be received by 5 p.m. Monday for publication the following Sunday.**

**MONDAY, APRIL 10**  
**KNITTING TRUNK SHOW**  
The Knitting Room, 251 Merrill Street in Birmingham, hosts a Berroco Yarns trunk show through April 11, 10 a.m.-5 p.m. For more information, call (248) 540-3623.

**HEALTH SERVICES**  
Twelve Twelve Mall in Southfield hosts Health-O-Rama, free and low-cost health screening and services sponsored by the United Health Organization through April 11, 10 a.m.-6 p.m. For details, call (248) 363-4111.

**TUESDAY, APRIL 11**  
**ELLEN TRACY ON PARADE**  
Ellen Tracy's spring collection comes down the runway and the Matilda R. Wilson Award is presented at Saks Fifth Avenue, the Somerset Collection in Troy to benefit the Boys and Girls Clubs of Southeastern Michigan, 11 a.m., Ellen Tracy Boutique, second floor. Tickets are \$35, include brunch and require reservation by April 10. To attend, call (248) 203-1200.

**HEALTHY SWIM**  
Wonderland Mall in Livonia hosts a Project Healthy