

Mall web site lets shoppers know about weekly sales



CARI WALDMAN

CYBER SHOP Ever wish you could find out what's on sale at the mall before actually setting foot in the door?

I took a trip to www.greatlakescrossing.com, the web site of Great Lakes Crossing, a more than 1-million-square-foot shopping center that houses outlet stores and entertainment and dining venues in Auburn Hills.

There, I found out I could do just that by browsing the site's sale listings from more than 200 retailers and a whole lot more.

The site, which is easy to use and uncluttered, is part shopping and part service.

With so much to do, and so little time to shop, come along on my tour of www.greatlakescrossing.com.

Download this

When I accessed the site for the first time, I wasn't a greatlakescrossing.com member.

The member service is a complimentary one, so I created a password for myself and registered for two site benefits bound to make my life — and any avid shopper's — easier.

The first benefit is a weekly e-mail bulletin that posts sales, new merchandise and promotions available at Great Lakes Crossing.

What I think is great about the e-mail bulletin is it's a custom service. When signing up, I selected the mall stores which I want sale information about. In other words, no extra junk mail on my desk top.

And, right now, those who sign up for the e-mail bulletin will be registered to win a shopping spree giveaway. Each week for the next four weeks Great Lakes Crossing will hand over \$1,000 in gift certificates to a site member registered for the e-mail bulletin.

I also signed up for the gift-giving reminder service. Here, I simply typed in significant dates that I want to be notified about.

The site will send me reminder e-mails two weeks in advance of the significant date, so not only will I never forget another birthday but also have plenty of time to shop for it. It's like having a personal shopper at my finger tips. I love this feature!

Navigate

A clever search engine offers you several ways to search for a sale.

Sales and bargains can be found through a store name or by merchandise categories, such as electronics, shoes or jewelry.

By clicking on "View All Current Coupons," a thumbnail list of bargains being offered by mall stores can be viewed. The coupons can be printed or taken to the mall.

Available this week is a coupon for a free pretzel at Auntie Anne's Pretzels, a free appetizer at Game Works and a free gift at the DIGNY outlet.

Wireless users of the Internet can browse Great Lakes Crossing's web site of a Palm handheld device or cell phone. The Palm V uses the AvantGo web browser, which is available at AvantGo.com. And Palm VII users can download the web browser directly from the mall's web site.

Cari Waldman of West Bloomfield is a freelance writer and stylist. Please send your Internet shopping questions and favorite sites to Cari@OCYBERSHOP@aol.com.

Best sales in town

Calling all savvy shoppers! If you come across a great sale or bargain that's slated to last through this week and next, let us know.

Be sure to include the store name, its location and the merchandise on sale. Please be as specific as possible.

We'll publish the best of the best sales in town as information becomes available to us.

Send an e-mail to nstafford@oc.homecomm.net or call (248) 901-2567.

See week's best sale, next page

Beauty and the beach

Local company makes swim wear for real women, takes custom orders



STAFF PHOTO BY TOM HORTWATER

Suiting women: Debbie McKeown, a manager and suit fitter for Exelnt Designs Swimwear, talks about how the company's handmade swimsuits helps women hide figure flaws and showcase their best features. With retail locations in West Bloomfield and Warren, the business offers both ready-to-wear and custom bathing suits.

BY NICOLE STAFFORD
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There isn't a woman on the planet who doesn't dread that fateful search for a bathing suit.

"It's the worst thing a woman has to do," says Debbie McKeown, a manager and suit fitter for Exelnt Designs Swimwear, a local business that makes custom bathing suits. The company also has two retail stores, one in West Bloomfield in The Boardwalk on Orchard Lake Road and another in Warren.

"Most women come in and say 'I want something up to my chin and down to my knees,'" says McKeown.

But just as sportswear and career apparel has evolved to better address the concerns and lifestyles of average women so has swim wear.

Long gone are the days when the two pieces of a bikini were exclusively sold as one unit.

Today, women in search of two-piece swimwear expect department stores and specialty retailers to stock separates in a variety of sizes and styles for mixing and matching.

Swimwear in West Bloomfield, which opened last December, not only stocks a generous selection

of bikini separates but also creates bathing suits from scratch according to customer specifications.

Custom suits range in price from \$100 to \$180 and are ready to pick up between 10 days and two weeks after placing an order.

Swimwear designer and owner of Exelnt Designs Swimwear Trish Karalla, who lives in Harrison Township, started the business in 1984 after making a bathing suit for herself.

"I just couldn't find a suit for myself so I made one. Then, my girlfriends wanted me to make suits for them," says Karalla.

"Eventually, it just got to the

point where I was spending every evening cutting and making suits."

Because the majority of women find suit shopping difficult, and so many go home dissatisfied, Karalla says her work is extremely gratifying. "I always say God put me on the earth to make women feel good in a swimsuit."

All pieces are lined with a control fabric and have bottoms that are cut fuller around the derriere.

Many styles have under-wire support on top. Other designs feature wide-set straps to offset wide hips and bottom cuts that lengthen and slim legs.

Plenting and wrap styles are used to hide body flaws, while seams work to accentuate the female form.

Karalla also offers a sarong, wrap or cover-up piece for each of her suit collections.

Ready-to-wear pieces are priced \$66-137, and store staff, much like traditional undergarment fitters, take an active role in helping customers select and try on suits.

The Exelnt Designs Swimwear store in West Bloomfield, 6883 Orchard Lake Road in The Boardwalk, can be reached at (248) 865-7330. The Warren store is located at 5751 East 13 Mile Road at Mound, call (810) 977-9140.

Suit sense

- Try on a size larger than you normally wear.
- Keep in mind what you'll be doing in your swimsuit. Are you planning to sun bathe or are you racing after kids at the beach?
- Bend over, sit, walk and even jump when trying on a bathing suit to make sure it fits and stays in place.
- Take advantage of mix-and-match separates and special sizing.
- Get a second opinion before buying a bathing suit.
- Invest in a sarong or skirt to go with your suit.
- Suits with spandex, 15 percent or more, help battle problem areas.
- To distract from wide hips or a larger belly, buy a suit with a strategically placed color block.
- If you're bigger on the bottom than the top, wide-set straps offset wide hips.
- Enhance a smaller chest with a top that has texture, such as ruffles, padding or an underwire.
- Minimize a larger chest with a neck cut that is high or square, but always opt for good top support.
- A wider cut bottom will counterbalance a larger top.
- Give short legs length with a suit cut high on the hip.
- Boyish figures seem to have a waist in suits with a thin belt, wrap front or color blocking that accents the waist.

Retail, style and special store events are listed in this column. Please send information to Malls & Mainstreets, c/o Observer & Eccentric Newspapers, 805 E. Maple, Birmingham, MI 48009. By fax, (248) 644-1314. E-mail, nstafford@oc.homecomm.net. Deadline for publication is two weeks in advance.

SUNDAY, JULY 1

SHOPPING SPREE GIVEAWAY

Great Lakes Crossing in Auburn Hills is giving away \$1,000 in gift certificates each week for the next four weeks. To enter, register for the shopping center's weekly e-bulletin service on the Internet at www.shopgreatlakescrossing.com.

WEDNESDAY, JULY 4

MALL OPEN FOR BUSINESS

Tel-Twelve Mall at Telegraph and 12 Mile roads in Southfield is open for business on the holiday, 10 a.m.-5 p.m. Anchor store hours may vary from mall hours. For more information, call (248) 353-4111.

SATURDAY, JULY 7

BARGAIN FEST

ADDED ATTRACTIONS

Livonia Mall at Seven Mile and Middlebelt roads holds Bargain Fest, an indoor garage sale, 10 a.m.-9 p.m. For additional information, call (248) 476-1160.

THURSDAY, JULY 12

MALL SIDEWALK SALE

Retailers at Tel-Twelve Mall in Southfield offer merchandise at discount prices inside and outside their stores, through July 15. Spend \$60 at any Tel-Twelve stores during the sidewalk sale and receive a wave pool pass good at Red Oaks or Waterford Oaks water parks while supplies last. Mall hours are 10 a.m.-9 p.m. Monday-Saturday and noon-5 p.m. Sunday. On July 12, take a seat in the mall food court and enjoy the sounds of the Oakland County Traveling Music Theater, noon. For additional information, call (248) 353-4111.

SATURDAY, JULY 14

DAY ON THE TOWN

Downtown Birmingham hosts its Day On The Town

sidewalk sale featuring merchandise bargains and more, 10 a.m.-10 p.m. throughout the downtown shopping district. For more information, call the Downtown Birmingham PSD at (248) 433-3550.

MONDAY, JULY 16

YEOLLEE TRUNK SHOW

Lynn Portnoy Women's Clothier, 25260 Franklin Road at Northwestern Highway in Southfield, showcases a clothing collection by Yeohlee through Tuesday, July 17. The collection includes all-season pieces, as well as coats for order. Trunk show runs 10:30 a.m.-7:30 p.m. on Monday and 10:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m. on Tuesday. For additional information, please call (248) 353-2900.

FRIDAY, AUGUST 10

FASH BASH

Marshall Field's presentation of the Founders Junior Council of the Detroit Institute of the Arts Fashion Bash will be held at the Fox Theatre in Detroit. Tickets cost \$35-300 and can be purchased at the Fox Theatre box office, call (313) 983-8611, or at Ticketmaster locations, call (248) 645-6666.