



Discount giant launches party supply superstore

By Gerald Frawley
staff writer

Armed with more paper plates, cups, plastic eating utensils, decorations, wrapping paper, banners, confetti and balloons than a Bob Hope traveling USO show, F&M Distributors is targeting the party-throwers of Oakland County and beyond.

After nearly two years in the planning stages, the Warren-based discount health and beauty chain has launched its first PartiGiant party goods superstore at Rochester and Hamlin roads in Rochester Hills.

PartiGiant, at 23,000 square feet, is slightly smaller than the typical superstore, but what it lacks in size, it makes up in inventory, according to Frank Newman, president and CEO of F&M Distributor.

In addition to carrying common and theme party goods, PartiGiant also carries decorations, games, costumes, catering supplies, snacks and drinks, and specialized food products like hors d'oeuvres, appetizers and desserts, Newman said.

PartiGiant services include party planning, party equipment rental and custom printing.

POLLY PATEREK, president of the Rochester caterer Pampered By Polly, said a store like PartiGiant will be useful for local caterers —

not necessarily as a source for supplies, since many caterers buy wholesale, but because it offers another place to send clients for party supplies not offered by the caterer.

Judy Tenjeras, owner of party supplies company Special Affairs in Rochester Hills, said she's already been by to take a look at the competition and was impressed by it, but she believes there is room for more than one supplier in town.

As for her plans, Tenjeras said she won't be changing the way she does business because of the new competition. "We'll continue to give good service, be well stocked, and take care of our customers."

NEWMAN SAID F&M had been looking at a new venture for almost two years and had decided on a single-category party goods superstore after evaluating its own sales. "Of the number of categories (health, beauty and party goods) we carry at F&M, this seemed the most likely," Newman said that for single-category stores like PartiGiant to succeed, the retailer must bring a product to the public in greater quantities and varieties than competitors and sell it less expensively. "Party goods are a product that is generally distributed through high-cost, inefficient channels."

If it succeeds, some of the success

of PartiGiant will be attributed to adopting F&M Distributors' strategy deal buying — purchasing only products manufacturers are willing to offer substantial savings on.

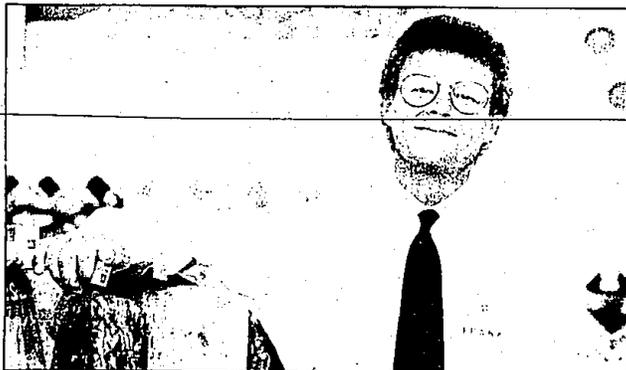
"But we'll also be borrowing a page from the warehouse clubs," Newman said. Efficiency and bare-bones overhead are the key strategies used by warehouse clubs to keep prices low.

"Of course, we won't be quite as bare bones as the warehouse clubs," he said. PartiGiant won't be a Neiman Marcus, but it will be nicely decorated.

Despite some of the problems encountered by other superstores — notably, a lack of interest by some name brand product manufacturers — Newman said he found party goods distributors and manufacturers to be enthusiastic about the concept of a superstore devoted to the category.

"Before now, manufacturers didn't have a strong distribution base," he said.

THE GREATEST obstacle to pulling the new venture off, he said, is the lack of sophistication in the industry. A lack of large distributors, poor tracking of shipments and a lack of computer scanner codes all had to be overcome before PartiGiant could become a reality, he said.



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The greatest problem posed by these obstacles was finding and selecting merchandise.

"It's not like in appliances where there are publications that evaluate products for you — we spent a year evaluating the products ourselves. Our mission is not to carry the cheap junk."

Newman said PartiGiant will follow an everyday-lowest-price strategy with merchandise generally 30 to

40 percent below retail. Not all retail categories are ideal candidates for superstores, Newman said, but a party goods superstore should succeed for several reasons. Superstores cater to planned, rather than impulsive buying, he said.

Superstores also cater to either big ticket items, like appliances and computers, or products bought in bulk, like office goods. "People

spend easily \$200 on a party today."

Finally, superstores must draw from a larger area to succeed — two factors that are aided by the wider selection and lower prices offered at them.

Assuming party throwers can save \$50, find a wider variety, and get good quality, Newman said he believes he can draw customers from all over Oakland County and parts of Macomb and Wayne counties.



Ester M. Yager, a Southfield resident, juggles several professional responsibilities. She serves as president of the Women's Economic Club, as vice president at United

Community Services of Metropolitan Detroit and, as pictured here, an instructor of business seminars at Madonna University in Livonia.

President of economic club enjoys exploring new ideas

By Doug Funke
staff writer

Ester M. Yager admits to enjoying challenges. She's been challenged in her job as a vice president at United Community Services of Metropolitan Detroit, a non-profit social help agency, and as a part-time instructor at Madonna University in Livonia.

Yager, a longtime Southfield resident, has stepped up to another challenge as president of the Women's Economic Club.

That non-partisan, non-profit organization, which observes its 30th anniversary next year, helps members develop leadership potential through communication, educational speakers and seminars, and camaraderie.

Yager elaborated several goals. "We want to do more with program presenters. We have 1,300 members and would like to see that increase. And we'd like to get more corporate sponsorship of luncheons," she said.

"It (membership) has crossed all economic, cultural, political and educational fields. It's a total mix."

Learning and teaching have always been important to Yager. She earned a master's degree from Marygrove College with an emphasis on piano performance. Later, she and a partner operated a combination record store/piano studio.

YAGER SUBSEQUENTLY used the business experience she absorbed to train sales staff and managers at J.L. Hudson's. She later served in a variety of training capacities for several Girl Scout councils.

Yager has spent 16 years with United Community Services, a Detroit-based agency that plans and delivers social services.

Her supervisory responsibilities include Tel-HELP, an information/referral service; the Center for Volunteerism; and the Tribute Fund, which provides small cash grants for individuals or groups that need a little extra push to reach a financial goal.

Along the way, Yager earned a master's degree in organizational communications from Wayne State University and completed the Leadership Detroit program. She has never regretted following the advice of mentors to join groups to meet decision makers, share ideas and otherwise make connections.

"A woman I worked with said this (Women's Economic Club) is an important organization to work with. It's important that I meet with these people," Yager recalled of her introduction to that organization some

13 years ago.

Yager now offers similar advice on networking skills — which she believes must be learned — and the value of continuing education for career enhancement as well as personal growth.

"I LOOKED at the age and educational background of people who were professional competitors and said I had better do something about this," Yager said of her decision to pursue a master's degree.

And her job? "It's tremendously satisfying," Yager said. "It calls for a lot of creativity, a lot of program design skills. There's a lot of freedom for saying, 'Here is a problem, what can we do about it?'"

Any job that constantly focuses on human problems and sometimes the seamier side of life can take an emotional toll, she conceded.

"It really is not easy sometimes," Yager said. So how does she cope in the down times? "Part of it is to think what things would be like without us, and you have to have a belief what you do makes a difference."

Yager started teaching at Madonna about 10 years ago. This semester, it's a course on managing non-profit organizations.

"I LOVE it. You learn so much when you teach. I found early on you can have all kinds of beliefs and theories. When you're in front of a group, you have to have a darn good hold on what you believe in," she said. Gerry Barrons, executive director of the Women's Economic Club, said she's impressed with Yager's leadership.

"Because she has worked in profit and non-profit spheres, she brings both perspectives," Barrons said. "Most of our members are women business owners or women in business."

"If you look where women are in management, one of the places you find more women is non-profits and government agencies. Ester brings that perspective."

She also understands what it takes to run a volunteer organization, Barrons added. "I think her leadership is just unquestionable."

John MacInnes, president at United Community Services, hired Yager back in 1978. "She is one of four vice presidents. Having achieved that kind of professional position I think is achievement itself," he said.

More information about the Women's Economic Club may be obtained by phoning the organization's office at 963-5088.

Madonna offers new degrees

By David S. Stein
special writer

Global competitiveness. Quality control.

They're terms that dominate the agendas of businesses, both large and small.

To help students keep abreast of these trends, Madonna University in Livonia is expanding its business graduate programs to offer new degree programs in international business and operations management.

"There is a necessity for business in southeast Michigan to look globally and identify as part of the global economic community," said Dr. Ernest Nolan, Madonna University's dean of graduate studies and humanities.

Both 36-semester hour programs, resulting in master of science degrees in business administration, are full concentrations, not just a specialty within an overall master's degree, Nolan said.

The programs are designed for working business people, who are expected to attend on a part-time basis.

THE INTERNATIONAL business program is part of Madonna's decision to expand its global involvement, Nolan said.

For the past two years, Madonna has had an extension unit of its master of science in administration program in Taiwan, where 60 students are enrolled.

The international business degree includes course work in international trade structures and systems, management, marketing and finance.

Students must pass a foreign language proficiency exam and complete a foreign work, study or travel experience.

Madonna has working relationships in place with Edgell and Lansdowne Colleges in England and U.S. trade missions in Belgium and

Germany.

OPERATIONS MANAGEMENT will require computer literacy and mastery of quantitative approaches to quality control. Students must have two years of full-time related job experience.

Coursework includes research design, forecasting and planning, marketing strategy and competitive strategy analysis and planning.

Each program requires a research project based on work experience, whose aim is to bring students and their graduate work to the attention of their supervisors.

But will local employers embrace these new programs over the traditional MBA path?

"Once employers look at the content of our program, they are usually very impressed," Nolan said. "Initially become less important than the content of our program."

Each new degree program, begun this fall semester, has more than 25 students enrolled.

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