

MALLS & MAINSTREETS

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SHOPPING CENTERED



Linda Ann Chomin

Pick a 'theme' for your tree

BY LINDA ANN CHOMIN
SPECIAL WRITER

Each Christmas when I was a child, our family decorated one real 10-foot tree with a host of ornaments. Today, families like Lianne LaMarre's, have smaller theme trees in every room of the house including the kitchen and bathroom.

A professional design consultant in Bloomfield Hills, LaMarre is currently working on a commission of 12 decorator trees for a Grosse Ile business owner who plans to give them as gifts to employees.

"When we lived in northern Canada, each of us had a tree to decorate. My brother's was rocking horses and mine, Ruggedy Ann and Andy," said LaMarre who credits her 11-year old son John for creating the red-and-white cookie cutter tree displayed on her kitchen counter.

"You could do Santas or teddy bears. You could use color themes like silver and gold. But try to coordinate the color with your home."

Red, black and white ribbons stream from the top of a 101 Dalmations tree in the dining room. This is a very special tree. LaMarre plans to donate it to the pediatric ward at Beaumont Hospital.

Two 6-packs of miniature Dalmations (available at Target for \$14.99 each) sit in the two-foot-high tree, lit by a strand of 35 white lights.

Underneath, a fire hydrant and Dalmation family from The Disney store await Christmas on a swatch of Dalmation-pattern fabric from JoAnn's Fabrics to complete the scene.

"We're hoping to get donations so we can provide each child in the pediatric ward with a stuffed Dalmation," said LaMarre.

At Michelle's Angel Attic in Livonia, ornaments of every description hang from trees, including dog and cat angels with movable legs (\$12-\$14.95). Another tree is filled entirely with brown bear angels made from terry cloth (\$8.95) and yet another with crystal and gold angels, all lit by a string of 10 angels. Spanish-looking paper mache angels by Lita Estrada (\$42) resemble folk art. Local artists Tami Gardner of Plymouth and Kay Hech of Livonia also have handmade angels here.

"They're coming in not only for their trees but to do their whole homes in angels," said owner Lisa Reed as she displayed a primitive-looking wood cow with tin wings by Bobbo (\$12.50).

"Angels are really popular and many people are doing trees with an ethnic theme."

While a kachina doll tree (\$7.50-\$9.50) is the center of attraction at Native West in Plymouth, it's easy to imagine a southwest or cowboy theme tree decorated with the ornaments found on a wood cactus in the middle of the gallery. Everything from birch bark canoes (\$6.50) to wood carved horses, deer and Thunderbirds (\$7.50); hand blown glass chili peppers (\$7.95); tin animals like howling coyotes \$7.50; and a totem topped by an eagle (\$14.50) will add a little spice to your holidays.

A lot of people will have a fiesta theme tree using the red, yellow and green chili pepper lights to give it a festive look," said gallery owner Annette Horn.

Storybook characters by New York designer Christopher Radko fill a Nordstrom tree with magic Humpty-Dumpty (\$50), a cat playing a fiddle, and Snow White and the seven dwarfs (\$86) bring fairy tales to life. A smaller tree for Baby's First Christmas is color coordinated with pink and blue bears, baby shoes and building blocks (\$4-\$9).

"What's nice about Christopher Radko's annual ornaments, is all the proceeds go toward finding cures for AIDS or pediatric cancer," said Kathie Dams, of the Nordstrom gallery.

Plymouth Nursery (Plymouth Ann Arbor Rd.) is a major source of tree inspirations with gardeners, sportsman and bird trees on display.

On a whimsical note, a Bonnie Baby tree is filled with ladybugs and others (\$4.99).

Survey shows holidays cost you - a grand



Here's a report from American Express that puts a price tag on Christmas.

According to the American Express Retail Index of 800 consumers, more than one-third of holiday shoppers expect to spend \$1,000 or more on gifts in 1996 and overall, about \$95 per person.

These estimates are level with what consumers expected to spend last year when asked to project their holiday budgets before the start of that shopping season.

"Shoppers expect to spend a total of \$1,160 this season, with an average of \$900 being spent on gifts, and the balance going toward holiday entertaining, decorations and travel," said Liz Barrett, a spokeswoman for American Express.

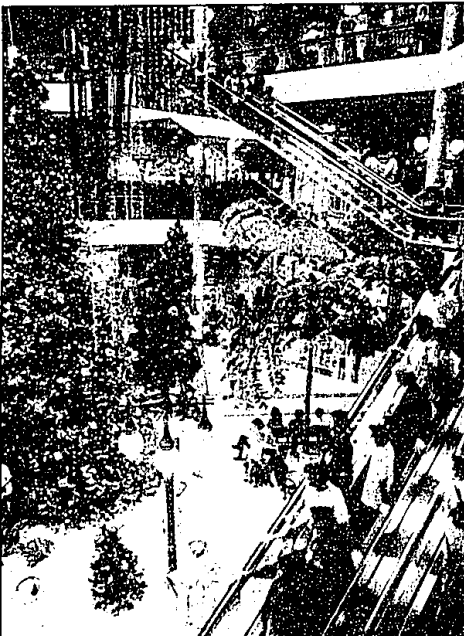
Other details of the survey:

- While department stores remain the number one choice to shop for gifts, there was a 10 percent increase in the number of shoppers who say they will shop at discount stores this year, overtaking clothing stores as the second most-popular place to shop.

- Five-percent more people this year said they would price-shop for their gifts.

- Of those buying gifts for children, 85-percent said they would seek out educational toys.

- Clothing topped the gift choice category, with music/movies a close second. Toys came in third.



'Tis the season: Shopping malls draw people by the thousands at this time of year, but all eyes aren't necessarily on the merchandise. To protect yourself from pickpockets and purse snatchers, be aware of your surroundings and travel light.

Shop safe

Be alert says security pro

When it comes to shopping safety, Don Bensley, director of security for the Taubman Co., said there's no substitute for common sense. In addition, he reminds holiday shoppers to:

- **Protect your money.** Don't carry large sums or put your pocket to check for your wallet - a clue to pickpockets. Men keep wallets in inside jacket pockets; women in zippered waist fanny packs.

- **Plan ahead.** Set a meeting place to regroup should family members become separated. Teach children to seek out uniformed security in case of emergencies.

- **Count your packages.** Do it each time you stop in a store, restroom or restaurant. Do a quick recount before you leave.

- **Store packages out of sight.** Lock parcels and coats in your trunk - out of sight and temptation.

- **Ask for help.** Never hesitate to ask for a mall security escort if you feel the least bit uncomfortable about walking to your car alone.

- **Park where you're comfortable.** Look for well-lit areas with lots of foot traffic. Use the valet service whenever possible.

- **Be aware of surroundings.** Pay attention to where you park and the stores that flank your entrance. If you tend to forget, jot the information down. Observe those around you.

- **Travel light.** When shopping, the less stuff to worry about, the better.

HOLIDAY RETAIL DETAILS

Dressed for the Holidays

Now through Dec. 8, you can put yourself in the holiday mood by taking the annual walk through the elegantly historic Dodge Mansion, Meadow Brook Hall in Rochester Hills.

Designers from the Somerset Collection shopping center in Troy have incorporated seasonal treasures from a select group of stores into the vignettes of each room.



As an added attraction, fashions of the 1920s-40s from the museum's historic collection have recently been "restored" and will also be on display. According to Lisa Balis Ashby, the hall's executive director, the treatment of this year's holiday walk is a departure from past walks to renew interest and enthusiasm in the very special event.

"What visitors will see is truly unique," she said. "One of the nation's largest, most significant historic houses dressed up for the holidays in genuine 1920s-40s detail, with a late twentieth century flair."

Adult admission is \$10; Children 12 and under \$5; Knote Cottage \$1. Hours are from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Dec. 2 and 3 until 9 p.m. For more information call (810) 370-3140.

Berkley welcomes new shop

Local entrepreneurs Michael Tonda and Michael Snell have restored the old convent that once housed the nuns of Our Lady of La Salette parish, on Coolidge just

north of 11 Mile in Berkley.

The 1920's English manor now houses gifts to delight home and garden enthusiasts under the name "Raphael's Magnificent Possessions." Says Snell, "the setting is filled with an eclectic array of treasures collected from all over the world. You'll be greeted by a warm fire, tranquil music, pleasant aromas and friendly faces."

The pair claim to have the "largest selection of European holiday ornaments in Michigan." The shop debuts on Dec. 2. Hours are Monday-Wednesday and Saturday 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Thursday and Friday until 8 p.m. For more details call (810) 546-0194.

Parisian's parent company grows

Profit's, Inc. of Knoxville, Tennessee (which recently acquired the department store divisions Youkers, Parisian and McRae's) now adds Herberger's with 40 stores in mostly western states. Herberger's headquarters are in St. Cloud, Minnesota.

The business combinations now make Profit's one of the largest regional department store chains in the country with 181 stores in 24 states and annual revenues in excess of \$2.3 billion.

Major brands carried in these stores include Lila Claiborne, Marina Christina, Susan Bristol, Tommy Hilfinger, Nautica, Polo/Ralph Lauren, Guess, Haggard, Levi's, Estee Lauder, Clinique, Lancome, Vanity Fair and Nine West.

Media Play opens in Livonia

Entertainment superstore Media Play opened another metro Detroit location at 30000 Plymouth Rd. in Livonia. The store sells music, books, movies and computer software with thousands of titles and discount prices.

Park Permits for holiday gifts

Nature lovers rejoice! The 1997 Michigan State Park annual motor vehicle permits are now available. Permits can be purchased for \$20 each (\$5 each for seniors 65 years or

older) at all state parks, plus the sporting goods departments of most Meijer Thifty Acres stores. The permits allow unlimited access to 96 different Michigan parks and recreation areas for one year. Call 617-373-9000 for more details.

Wonders of Wonderland Mall

Holiday retailers at Wonderland Mall in Livonia include Wall of Fame Sports, Hickory Farms, Stockings to Stuff, Detroit Science Center Store, Polar Hood Hats, Venice Mens Wear plus many more.

Shoppers can share their happy holidays by buying an ornament for the Community Hospice Tree of Life, or dropping off non-perishable food items, kids clothes and new toys at the Information Booth. Mall marketing director Robbie Sherman said the donations will be distributed to the needy on Dec. 24.

Massages to go

The Birmingham Neuromuscular Clinic (specializing in stress management, pain reduction and shiatsu massages) offers on-site massages to offices and businesses, plus gift certificates for the holidays.

"That's fully-clothed, on-site 15-minute massages," according to staffers Sarah, Michael, Nancy and Dennis. The clinic is on 14 Mile, a block east of Woodward. Appointments by calling (810) 642-6789.

Free watch appraisals

Back In Time International, 112 Penobscot St. in Birmingham, offers free, verbal appraisals on vintage pocket watches and wrist watches through Dec. 31. For more details call (810) 540-4646.

Free valet parking

Just pull up your car to the Olga's Kitchen entrance off Wayzata Rd., and the Westland Shopping Center's valet staff will park it for free as a gift to holiday shoppers.

The mall continues to grow with the expansion of Kohl's, an addition to Sears, and a new Wicks-N-Sticks.

Skaters Take Note!

Skaters and dancers will find Skatedesign's new store at 612 W. University in downtown Rochester an emporium of stretch spandex. Owner Sue Lyons, herself a competitive ice skater, said the shop carries more than 5,000 yards of fabric, plus beads, sequins and genuine Austrian crystal rhinestones, perfect for creating costumes. Open limited hours at (810) 609-8919.

Hotel offers shop package

The Hotel Baronette, located on a perimeter of Twelve Oaks Mall in Novi, offers its annual holiday package for gift seekers. For \$79, book an overnight stay (before or after your shopping expedition) which also includes a power breakfast 7:30-9:30 a.m. and cocktails from 5-7 p.m. while hotel staff wrap all the gifts you bought during the day while you enjoy a swim in the pool, or workout in the fitness center. Call (810) 349-7800 for reservations.

Custom dolls look like daughters

A Colorado-based company is taking the doll world by storm, and you're probably thinking, "Why didn't I think of that!" My Twinn will make a doll replica of your child - or yourself from age 3 to 12, for \$149.95. You must send a recent snapshot, plus complete a personalized form, asking you to select specifics like hair, eye and skin color, plus eyebrow and face shape, hair style and glasses, freckles, moles or birthmarks!

Call 1-800-469-8946 to order or for more information. The ship date is 4-6 weeks, depending on demand. Boy dolls will be available in 1997.



Disney delight: Lianne LaMarre poses with her 101 Dalmations Tree.

PHOTO BY JERRY ZALOTSKY

TUESDAY, DEC. 3

Special Shopping

Area Target stores host 23rd annual event for senior citizens and those with disabilities, providing shopping, gift wrapping, refreshments, entertainment, 8-10 a.m. (810) 853-1590.

WEDNESDAY, DEC. 4

Tree Festival

Third annual Celebration of Trees, co-sponsored by Livonia Chamber of Commerce through Dec. 12 near the Marriott Hotel entrance. Trees were created and donated by area businesses for auction at annual Christmas event featuring a Jackson's fashion show. Laurel Park Place. Six Mile/Newburgh, Livonia.

ADDED ATTRACTIONS

(313) 427-2122.

THURSDAY, DEC. 5

Kids-only shop

Birmingham Community House and Jacobson's co-host a "store" where little ones can buy inexpensive gifts for family members assisted by teen volunteers daily from 3-6 p.m., Saturday 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. through Dec. 14. Community House, Bntes/Merrill. Downtown Birmingham. (810) 644-6832.

FRIDAY, DEC. 6

Radio Broadcast

Join Kevin O'Neill from WKQI radio for "Christmas Follies '96" 11:30 a.m. Center Court.

Wonderland, Plymouth/Middlebelt, Livonia. (313) 622-4100.

SATURDAY, DEC. 7

Kids program

Hot cocoa and cookies at a holiday sing-along in center court 1 p.m. Tel-Twelve, 12 Mile/Telegraph, Southfield. (810) 353-4111.

Photographer visits

Monte Nagler, whose work "Winter Path" was chosen for the cover of the Birmingham/Bloomfield Symphony Orchestra's premiere CD "Sounds of the Season," visits the mini mall from noon to 3 p.m. where an exhibit of his photographs runs through Dec. 28. Bloomfield Plaza, Maple/Telegraph. Bloomfield Hills.