

# MALLS & MAINSTREETS

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## SHOPPING CENTERED



Donna Mulcahy

## Infant car seats still in review

BY DONNA MULCAHY  
SPECIAL WRITER

Few things have frustrated me more in life than trying to install my daughter's car seats. No matter how hard I or my husband tried, we couldn't get her rear-facing infant seat, or the toddler seat she currently uses, to fit as snugly and securely in our car as the directions said they should.

We're not alone in our frustration. According to the U.S. Department of Transportation, 80 percent of the child safety seats on the road today are improperly installed. In some cases, it's due to human error, but in many more it's because the seat and the car are incompatible.

Thankfully, the U.S. Department of Transportation is doing much to make car seats safer and easier to install. Last month, it proposed a rule that would require all new cars, trucks and vans and all new child safety seats to have a universal attachment system.

In addition, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) is developing a CD-ROM that would help consumers choose the right car seat for their vehicle.

However, even if the proposed rule is adopted, it wouldn't take effect for another two years. And according to Cheryl Nevean, a NHTSA highway safety specialist, "The CD-ROM won't be available until this summer at the earliest."

What should parents do in the mean time? Nancy Delaney has some advice. She is coordinator of the Child Passenger Safety Program at Children's Hospital of Michigan, and coordinator of the Metro Detroit Safe Kids Coalition.

The most important things, she said, are to follow the manufacturer's instructions closely and to hold onto your receipt. "If you buy a car seat and it doesn't fit your car, you can take it back and get a different one."

Based on her experience, these are three of the more common incompatibility problems and possible ways to fix them:

• **A contoured or sloping back seat that causes a baby's head to flop forward when sitting in a rear-facing infant car seat.**

**Possible solution:** Place a rolled up towel or blanket on the back seat's bottom cushion to create a level surface on which to place the car seat.

• **The back, middle seat belt is attached to the car via two hard plastic "stalks." The height of the stalks enables the car seat to slide around, even when the seat belt is tightly cinched around the car seat.**

**Possible solution:** Try putting the car seat in the back passenger side position, because the seat belt may be different there. However, if there is a shoulder belt there, you'll have to use a locking clip, which you can get from the car seat manufacturer or your car dealer, if the car seat did not come with one.

(If the front passenger seat is protected by an airbag, never put a child safety seat in the front seat, because the airbag could kill the child if deployed.)

• **The back seat safety belts do not emerge from the crack between the back seat's vertical and horizontal cushions. Instead, they emerge one or more inches forward of that crack. This causes the car seat to slide around, even when the seat belt is fastened as tight as it will go around the car seat.**

**Possible solution:** Order a top tether from the car seat manufacturer and have a car dealer install it. Or buy a car seat in Canada, where top tethers are already required, and then have a car dealer install a tether receptacle near the top of your back seat.

Under the Department of Transportation's proposed rule, all new car seats would have to have a top tether and two side tethers, and all new vehicles would have to have a locking mechanism for these tethers.

The public has until May 10 to comment on the proposed rule. For the CD-ROM "Your Child, Your Car, Your Choice," or for information about recalled car seats, call the NHTSA Auto Safety Hotline toll-free at 1-800-424-9393.

Or visit the NHTSA web site at <http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov/people/injury/childseats>.



Prototype: New car seats would be equipped with top and side tethers that would anchor them securely to new vehicles.  
PHOTO COURTESY NHTSA

## Clip and save :

## Coupon use is up (and on the Internet)



Consumers have always tried to find ways to save on products through sales, discount/bulk stores, and most of all, coupons. In fact, coupons have been around for more than 100 years.

By SHERI PALADINO  
SPECIAL WRITER

In 1896, a druggist distributed handwritten tickets offering soda fountain customers free glasses of Coca Cola and the coupon was born. The very first "formal" coupon appeared that same year on a C. W. Post ad for Grape Nuts breakfast cereal for one cent off.

In the mid 1970's, coupon distribution skyrocketed due to newspaper inserts.

Today, more than 3,000 manufacturers offer coupon discounts on grocery items from food to cleaning products. And although they claim they are trying to wean shoppers off coupons, 6.2 billion coupons were redeemed in 1994.

Studies show 71 percent of all consumers use coupons on a regular basis and that number is growing. Coupons save us more than \$4.8 billion a year.

"We reach 56 million households nationwide (with coupons) and it increases every year," said Lynn Liddle, vice president, corporate communications at Valassis Communications Inc., of Livonia, one of the major distributors for coupons via newspaper inserts.

"We see a lot more coupons on emerging products," she said. "As new products come on the market, manufacturers will do more couponing, take body wash products for example."

Typical coupon clippers used to be middle-aged homemakers with children, but significant changes have

occurred over the years as more couples share household responsibilities. Four out of 10 retirees use coupons on a regular basis.

"Couponing is somewhat of a hobby. It's a pleasure to be able to save money," explained retiree Joseph Wilk of Troy. "I save nearly \$15 a week by spending a half hour per week clipping coupons."

Most grocers will double manufacturer coupons, but you can't use them, once popular in the 1980's, seems to have disappeared. However, if you look hard enough, some stores offer the super double coupon — you are able to redeem coupons up to \$1 for double their value.

"I'd say I could save a lot using coupons isn't worth the time it takes to clip and organize," said Kristyn Godlew of Clarkston.

But Dave Beutler of Walled Lake makes the time.

"I clip coupons on weekends with my kids, they love it," he said. "It all depends on how much your time is worth to you. Twenty minutes can save you \$10. Some people probably buy items just because they have a coupon. I compare the couponed item to similar items and won't buy it if it costs more."

Most grocers print the coupon redeeming benefits at the bottom of receipts, showing dollars saved for the day. Detroit-area shoppers (along with those of six other cities nationwide) redeem coupons more than anyone else in the country.

### On-line clippers

The Internet, although new to



Coupon cutter: Sheri Paladino of Macomb Township believes in coupon clipping with co-workers in her Troy office building.

many, already has a site dedicated to shoppers looking to save money. CouponNet™ has more than 3.4 million visitors a month. The site is dedicated to posting weekly messages for anyone interested in trading coupons with people from all over the U.S.

The long-term goal is to offer coupons on-line that you can print off at home and redeem at the store.

Celeste Snyder, a CouponNet™ user said through E-Mail to a contact in Troy, that she saves hundreds of dollars a month by exchanging coupons with people she has met through the Internet.

"It's almost a hobby now, seeing how much money I can save," she said.

Anyone with access to the Internet can post their message and wait for a reply, exchange addresses and coupons! Messages like "Free coupons to trade," "What do you need?" "Help! I'm drowning in coupons!" pepper the CouponNet™ posting page.

Beverly Hills resident Gayle Godlew boasts of her coupon capers.

"I save about \$10 a week with coupons. I've gotten products free as a result of double and triple promotions."

Retiree Wilk added, "I have received money back from turning in coupons on products I bought. I've had a \$80 grocery bill reduced to \$12 after getting credit for my coupons."

### Good advice

• Clip coupons for products you already use. Throw the rest out and don't look back.

• Accumulate coupons semi-weekly and use them at the store that offers the biggest discount — double coupon or super double coupon grocers. If you can, wait for a sale to use your coupons.

• Stock up during a sale, especially if you have multiple coupons to use.

The opportunity to save money is out there and it's simple. You can find coupons in Sunday inserts, in store promotions, via mail, or exchanging with family members and neighbors.

# Confessions from a compulsive clipper

By SHERI PALADINO  
SPECIAL WRITER

I never thought I would be like my mother.

She would come home once a week with details about sales at grocery stores, receipts documenting her numerous savings, and tales of a great day of "couponing."

I used to think my time was too valuable and I would never let coupons decide what I purchased. I was not a housewife then, now I am. Oh how I have changed! I am a 28-year-old clone of my mother and it's not a bad thing.

The first week on my own I bought everything in sight without a single coupon. My bill was outrageous, but I refused to take the time to clip coupons.

Weeks turned into months and dollar signs turned into zeros (or minuses on my budgets). I realized I had to look through those weekly inserts and get clipping.

Month one of clipping was a chore to me. I cut out everything and bought useless items, although my bills were less. Month Two saved me a little more money. Month Three, Four and Five

made me a savvy shopper, sharper, smarter and more knowledgeable than the person in front of me spending \$200 on groceries without a single coupon!

Now I have my own strategy and it works for me. I use coupons for the products I buy anyway. I go to super double coupon markets and buy when the items are on sale. I stock up because I get multiple coupons from people I trade with.

I work full time and do not have children. I am not the typical coupon clipper. I average one hour a week clipping and organizing — not 40. I see the savings semi-weekly when I shop, and it makes me happy. It's such a simple task, but my dollar is important to me since I am not a millionaire.

I have actually saved 83-percent on one shopping trip. I will never spend \$4.69 for a box of cereal again. I can get it for less if it's on sale for half-off, plus I have a \$1 coupon!

I am not compulsive, I have just learned how to shop. I have to do it twice a month anyway, so why not make it fun? Now I go over to my mom's with sales success stories and she laughs remem-

bering those words I once proclaimed, "I'll never cut coupons, it's a waste of time."

Wow! How I have changed. I believe the savings have afforded me some minor luxuries I have now. I do not scrimp and save on furniture or fun luxuries; by clipping coupons I can afford to splurge on the best.

I am even trying to persuade my sister to "see the light." My fiancé yells at me every time I come home with bags full of groceries (most of which are for him).

"We can't afford all this stuff," he argues.

I show him my receipt.

"It would have cost me \$75 without coupons, but I spent \$23," I reply.

He drops his mouth. I smile.

And we live happily ever after!

If you are interested in forming a local coupon club, contact Sheri Paladino at P. O. Box 7062, Troy, MI 48064-7062. She is a journalism graduate from Wayne State University who works as an administrative assistant at Akzo Nobel Coatings, Inc. in Troy.

## ADDED ATTRACTIONS

### FRIDAY, MARCH 21

#### Parenting fair

Booths and exhibits by Oakland Family Services, 10 a.m. to 7 p.m. Kohl's Court near Sears. Summit Place. Elizabeth Lake/Telegraph. Waterford. (810) 682-0123.

#### Spring fashion shows

Somersel Collection presents couture spring designs from stores on both sides of the shopping center in the south rounda at 4:30 and 8 p.m. Repeated March 22 at 1 and 8 p.m. Complimentary. Come early for the best seats.

Somersel Collection South.

Big Beaver/Coolidge. Troy.

(810) 643-7440.

#### Petites breakfast

Saks Fifth Avenue presents its spring petites lines 10 a.m. with designer tops from Ellen Tracy Company, Adrienne Vittadini, and other suit and dress collections. Reservations required. Somersel Collection South.

Big Beaver/Coolidge. Troy.

(810) 643-3331.

### SATURDAY, MARCH 22

#### Bunny Breakfast

Big Boy's hosts Bunny Breakfasts on March 22 and 29 at 9:30 a.m. for \$3 per child. The ticket also includes a free movie pass for an 11 a.m. film at The Movies at Fairlane. Fairlane Town Center. Michigan/Southfield Fwy. Dearborn

(313) 593-3330.

#### Spring musical

Performances of "It Might As Well Be Spring," by the Children's Theatre of Michigan at 1 and 3 p.m. in Center Court. Peter Rabbit visits held in a storybook setting. The mall has been "potted" with more than 1,200 flowering plants.

Twelve Oaks 12 Mile/Novi. Novi.

(810) 348-9438.

#### Children's Craft Fun

Sharon Tenhooen invites kids, 3-12, to decorate a 9-inch Styrofoam egg 11 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. Center Mall. Supplies donated by mall merchants. Free. Register at mall management office before March 22.

Livonia Mall. Seven Mile/Middlebelt.

(810) 476-1160.

#### Spring kids events

Mechus Restaurant caters a bunny breakfast at 9 a.m. \$10 per person includes Polaroid photo. From noon to 4 p.m. kids can bring in a basket to use in the mall parade from center court, collecting candy from each store. \$5 photo with the bunny includes keepsake frame.

Great Oaks Mall.

Livernia/Walton. Rochester Hills.

(810) 850-1666.

#### Fashion show

Crowley's presents its spring collections at 11:30 a.m. and 2:30 p.m. near the storefront. Tel-Twelve, 12 Mile/Telegraph. Southfield.

(810) 353-4111.

### SUNDAY, MARCH 23

#### Orchid Show

Michigan Orchid Society presents "Palm Sunday Show" through March 23 throughout the shopping center. Laurel Park. Six Mile/Newburgh. Livonia. (313) 462-1100.