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Flared & frayed: The newest look from T.J. Maxx.

School 'bells' ring with retro style

I went back-to-school shopping recently with my 16-year-old cousin, Shannon, and her parents. Talk about an educational experience. Shannon filled me in on what is "in."

SHOPPING CENTERED



DONNA MULCAHY

Like hemp necklaces. "They're made of hemp, which is like a thin rope, and it's like you make a knot, and then put on a bead, and then make another knot, and put on another bead," Shannon explained.

"I know. You mean macrame necklaces," I interrupted, thinking of the little macrame owl necklace that sits in my jewelry box. My Aunt Irene gave it to me around 1976.

"Oh. I don't know what macrame is. I've never heard of that before," Shannon said as we walked through Westland Mall. "It's macrame," her mom Cindy assured me. (We found hemp necklaces at Claire's boutique.)

"What else is big?" I asked Shannon.

"Flares," she said.

"What are flares?" I asked.

"They're jeans that fit tight from the waist down, but then they start to flare out at the knees. You used to call them bell-bottoms, but they're not called that anymore," she said. "They're called flares."

"Oh," I replied. What else is there to say when suddenly you feel old?

We trudged on, mainly looking for clothes. But along the way, I learned that decorative patches embroidered with pictures of "peace frogs," "Dee-Dee cars" and other '70s icons are in kids' sew them on the back pockets and legs of their jeans. Purses shaped like paper grocery bags and big enough to hold textbooks are popular with girls, as are butterfly-shaped barrettes, hobby pins and jewelry, Shannon informed me.

Cargo pants (they have lots of pockets), khakis, camouflage-style pants, nylon sweat pants that snap up the sides, all things Nike and Adidas, and jeans that have belt pockets as big as that they're on the thigh, are very popular. I discovered as we visited Kohl's, the Gap, Hudson's, The Limited, Sears and J.C. Penney.

Must-have items on Shannon's list included thick-soled, military-style boots and V-necked, striped argyle sweaters and sweater vests in olive, navy and brown. The sweaters are supposed to be worn over tuckered, long-sleeved Oxford shirts, preferably in white.

"So in a nutshell," I said to Shannon, "the look this year is Michigan militia meets Ozzie and Harriet."

"That's perfect," she said enthusiastically, sounding very impressed with my realization. "That's the perfect way to describe it."



Guy gear: Rugby stripes and cords for boys, from Jacobson's.



Mad plaid: Nautica's University Group for kid-size cords, from Jacobson's.



Cool khaki: You can't go wrong with khaki wide-leg cargo pants, a V-neck T-shirt and a hooded sweatshirt from T.J. Maxx.



Skirting the issue: Though baggy pants are cool for guys and girls, sometimes a girl's got to have a flirty skirt and a fleece pullover, from Jacobson's.

Hit the hallways in hip fashions

When Kaylin Rutkowski starts first grade this fall, she'll skip into Oxford's Lakeville Elementary in her black platform sneakers and flares. What? No red plaid jumper and shiny Mary Janes? "Absolutely not," laments her mom, Sherry. When she asked Kaylin what she wanted to wear to school, now that she's a "big girl," the answer was firm and without hesitation.

Kaylin, at 6 going on 16, wants jeans and overalls that flare out below the knee, just like the ones the girls wear in the TV commercials. "She wants to look like the teen-agers in the neighborhood," says Sherry.

So mother and daughter went on a shopping excursion to Old Navy and found the perfect pair of flared jeans. When they returned home, Kaylin excitedly modeled her new purchase for family members and proclaimed, with a slight whistle (her two front teeth are missing). "Aren't my 'flares' cool?" Fortunately, Kaylin's school bag sports Ruggate rather than Spice Girls.

Designer Trends

But Kaylin's not alone in her desire to look like a Gap-ad supermodel. And top fashion designers are well aware of this trend. Fashion magazines feature glossy multi-page ads of kids in Tommy Hilfiger, Polo, CK Calvin Klein and DKNY. And rather than marketing frilly pink dresses or

corduroy coveralls to clementine-aged children, the designers are dressing tiny tykes in miniature versions of their grown-up styles: sweater vests with cargo khakis, oversized chenille sweaters, frayed jeans and platform loafers or clogs. Little sisters and brothers learn trendy and funky at a very young age.

According to a survey by T.J. Maxx, dresses and skirts are not *de rigueur* for kids this fall. "A staggering 87% prefer pants to skirts." Says T.J. Maxx fashion spokesperson Laura Cervone, "The hottest trend is boy-inspired dressing with a flair. We're seeing baggy cargo pants combined with a tee and sweatshirt. White shirts are tucked into extra-wide-leg jeans or carpenter pants. Chunky-soled boots and shoes paired with leather knapsacks complete the ensemble for today's most fashionable youths." The youngest schoolgirls choose more age-appropriate accessories such as rain-bow embroidery or flower appliques.

Michelle Harrison, however, skewers the percentages a bit, as she models a chic gray v-neck brushed acrylic T-shirt dress at Jacobson's Back-To-School fashion show at Laurel Park Place in Livonia. The Farmington Hills sixth-grader, a future fashion designer, couldn't wait to purchase the designer-label ensemble. "Tommy Girl (Tommy Hilfiger) is my favorite label this season," she says.

Likewise, Erika Lazar, 7, a student at Roper school in Bloomfield Hills, modeled a Hartstrings skirt and fleece top. So we will see some girls who really look like girls in the schoolyard this fall.

Flare Flair

Middle- and high-schoolers drive these trends, so their picks this season are the same as above, just in larger, more-expensive sizes. Molly Barackman, 12, was given a budget for her back-to-school wardrobe and she spent the past couple of weeks planning and crunching numbers. "I had \$300 to spend and about \$400 worth of stuff that I really wanted," says the eighth-grader. She clipped her "must-haves" out of catalogs and pasted them on posterboard, then proceeded to mix-and-match outfits until she pared her purchases down to about \$340. "I'm doing chores around the house to earn the extra \$40," she says.

What's on Molly's wish list? "Mostly dark denim wide-leg jeans and flares, and some T-shirts, both long and short sleeved. Lots of blue," she adds. She passed on wool sweaters and ankle-length skirts. "The skirts are not my style." But she's still debating on a pair of platform sneakers, preferably black with white "Adidas" stripes. She also liked the butterfly accessories and scented T-shirts and necklaces.

10 Back-To-School Trends

From the fashion experts at Laurel Park Place

1. Wide-leg jeans
2. Flares (or bell-bottoms)
3. Baggy shorts
4. Ribbed mock-turtlenecks
5. Overalls, cargo pants and carpenter pants
6. Uniform-stripes on jersey zip-neck shirts
7. Stretch jeans
8. Anything khaki
9. Low-waisted hip-huggers
10. Skirts, with button-down shirts.

News of special events for shoppers is included in this calendar. Send information to *Malls & Mainstreets*, c/o Observer & Eccentric Newspapers, 805 East Main, Birmingham, MI 48009; or fax (248) 644-1314. Deadline: Wednesday 5 p.m. for publication on Sunday.

TUESDAY, AUG. 18

HOT STUFF

Trinity Designs & Gifts presents a Giftware Showcase & OPEN-HOUSE Show, a one-stop shopping experience for unusual gifts at affordable prices. Merchandise includes home accessories, jewelry, gift baskets, bath collections and specialty clay. Free admission, 6-10 p.m. Northwest Unitarian Universalist Church, 23925 Northwestern Hwy., Southfield.

THURSDAY, AUG. 20

NEWS HOUND

Former CNN anchor Bob Loure will discuss and

ADDED ATTRACTIONS

sign copies of his new book *5 Seconds to Air: Broadcast Journalism Behind the Scenes*, a chronicle of his life and the stories that have shaped our lives. Loure also provides his own formula for how to succeed in broadcasting. 7 p.m. Borders Books & Music, 34300 Woodward, Birmingham.

SATURDAY, AUG. 22

FALL TRENDS

View the fall collections from top American and European designers including Zang Tseli, Escada and Calvin Klein, Thierry Mugler, Dolce & Gabbana, and Donna Karan. The event at Nordstrom begins at 8 a.m. with a continental breakfast. Fashion show at 8:30 a.m. Seating is limited. Call (248) 816-5100, ext. 1690 by August 12. Nordstrom, Somerset Collection, Troy.

CREATURES DOWN UNDER

The Living Science Foundation presents "Australia" at Livonia Mall. Guests will meet cockatoos, bearded dragons, pythons, frogs, skinks, vasa langroos. 12-4 p.m. Livonia Mall, Seven Mile and Middlebelt roads.

SUNDAY, AUG. 23

GO WILD

Laurel Park Place in Livonia hosts an after-school Wild Trax party to benefit the Detroit Zoo and Wild Thing Society. Live entertainment by Stuart Franko and food from the restaurants of Laurel Park Place. 6-9 p.m. Contact the Detroit Zoological Society for tickets. (248) 641-5717.

BEANIE BONANZA

The Plymouth "Beanie Baby Show & Sale" returns to the Plymouth Cultural Center, 625 Farmer Street. The show features dealers and collectors selling current and retired Beanie Babies and accessories. Beanie Baby door prizes every hour. Admission: \$4. Children ages 4-12, \$2. 11 a.m.-3 p.m.