

New shops and eateries debut in local malls



If you just can't shake that sweet tooth while shopping at Laurel Park Place Mall in Livonia, head to Godiva Chocolatier, the mall's newest store.

The shop, a stand-alone kiosk located in the commons area, sells premium chocolates, packaged gourmet coffee, biscotti, and mini-biscotti. Laurel Park Place is located on Six Mile Road, a quarter mile east of I-275.

More at Laurel Park
Sweet Lorraine's Cafe has opened in its fourth Detroit-area location at the Marriott Hotel in Laurel Park Place Mall, Livonia.

The eatery is open for breakfast, lunch and dinner and offers a menu that emphasizes fresh, seasonal ingredients. Lunches range from \$6-\$12. Dinners are from \$7-\$19. Selections range from deli-style sandwiches to main courses. (743) 953-7480.

New in Auburn Hills
Look for these three new stores at Great Lakes Crossing, located at I-75 and Baldwin Road in Auburn Hills:
■ Master Spas manufactures and sells spas, jacuzzis and patio sets.
■ Noah's Ark, a kiosk in the "district 6" section of the mall, carries Beanie Babies and accessories.
■ Sprint PCS, a kiosk in "district 7," sells a variety of wireless phones.

New in Dearborn
Three new businesses have opened at Fairlane Town Center, located north of Michigan Avenue and west of the Southfield expressway in Dearborn:
■ Games Workshop sells war games, pieces for war game sets and miniatures. Customers can play Warhammer on Tuesdays, Mordheim and Battlefleet Gothic on Wednesdays and Warhammer 40,000 on Thursdays. Gaming runs from 5-9 p.m.
■ Fusion Spa & Salon offers coloring, highlighting, hair extensions, perms, cuts and styling. Services are available on a drop-in or appointment basis.

■ Bourbon St. Grill offers New Orleans-inspired cuisine with seating for 834 patrons.

New in Lake Orion
Fortress Games, Inc. sells historical and science fiction miniatures, games and game terrain.

It also runs open gaming from 5-7 p.m., on Wednesday nights. Participants bring up to 1,000 points of any painted Warhammer 40K army to battle.
The shop is located at 8 Shadblow West in downtown Lake Orion.

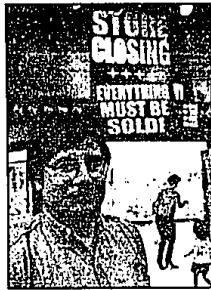
At the lake
Venture Outdoors of Plymouth has ventured north, opening a second store on the shore of Walled Lake.
The store specializes in Neeky kayaks, imported from British Columbia, Canada. Shoppers can test drive any kayak in Walled Lake at anytime during store hours.

They also can join a Wednesday night class, taught by a certified American Canoe Association instructor, to increase their paddling skills.
The Plymouth store is located at 4601 Five Mile. (734) 483-1987. Call the Walled Lake store at (248) 669-2000.

At Lakeside Mall
Catherine Wing, a Troy resident, is the new marketing director at Lakeside Mall.

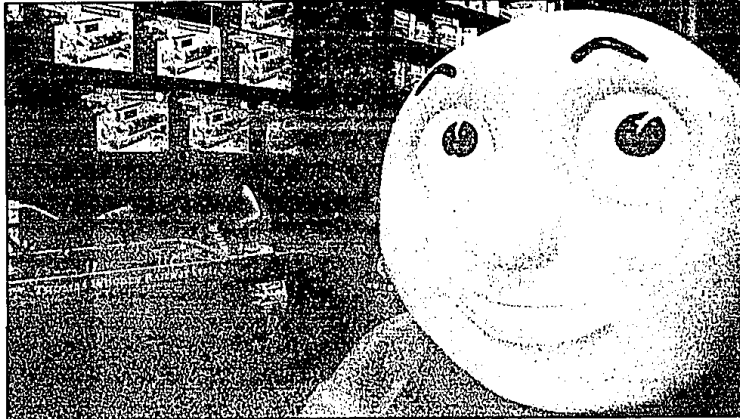
Wing, who spent five years with Michael Fitzer & Associates in Troy, has worked with a variety of retail clients, including Somerset Collection, Car Tunes and Alvin's Bride.
Lakeside Mall is located on M-59 and Schoenherr in Sterling Heights.

At Somerset Collection
James Westcott of Lake Orion is the new assistant general manager at Somerset Collection.
Westcott had been general manager and marketing director since 1993 at Meadowbrook Village Mall in Rochester Hills.



■ 'Some local hobby stores might carry what we do, but it's not as extensive.'

Chris Niclo
—The Great Train Store



Goodbye Thomas: Ian Larson, 2, of Clawson, plays with a Thomas wooden railway station at The Great Train Store which will close this summer.

Troy train store rolls out of town

BY SHARON DARGAY
STAFF WRITER
Nancy Adams has a fool-proof method for shopping with reluctant tots.

She promises her son, Erik, 4 1/2, a trip to The Great Train Store where box cars clatter along an overhead track, a wooden engine rolls on tyke-sized terrain and — best of all — hundreds of smiling Thomas the Tank Engine toys greet adoring preschoolers.

"It's the only way I can get him to come to the mall with me!" Adams



Buying: Patricia Zimolzak bags toys for Connie Tramel, while Lauren Lewis (left) and Hailey Tramel check out merchandise.

muscd, carting a bag of Thomas merchandise from the store. "These guys had everything for Thomas here. The only other place I know where you can get this much is at the traveling Thomas tour, which we saw in Baltimore."

The Birmingham woman will have to find a new bargaining chip and toy source this summer when Thomas and his friends chug to the end-of-the-line at the Somerset Collection store.

The 15-year-old toy store chain, which boasts the largest inventory of Thomas toys, is closing the doors of 48 stores, including its only Michigan store in Somerset Collection North.

Anyone with a preschool-aged child knows all about the BBC program, Thomas the Tank Engine, broadcast on PBS stations, including Channel 66 in the Detroit-area.

And they know about the railroad-theme merchandise, from tee-shirts to train cars to baby dishes, that the series has spawned.

Then there's Theodore Tugboat and his floating pals, stars of the Canadian-made PBS animated series and of their own product

line. And Brio, a high quality brand of wooden train parts for tots.

The Great Train Store stocked a better-than-average supply of all three merchandise lines, but parents of preschoolers counted on the store to carry a broad inventory of Thomas toys.

"We have the largest selection," said store manager Chris Niclo. "We have 62 characters."

The store also carried trains and related merchandise for more serious collectors and adult hobbyists.

"We wanted to appeal to the entire family with something for everyone," Niclo explained.

Niclo closed the chain's Buffalo, N.Y. store before heading to Somerset to train a new manager. A few weeks later the company ordered him to close the four-year-old Somerset store.

He's not sure of the final business day, but everything in the store is for sale.

"There were a lot of crying children when we closed the Buffalo store," he noted.

He said the company began reorganizing more than a year ago to combat financial troubles, although "business was good" at the Somerset store.

"Some local hobby stores might carry what we do, but it's not as extensive. This was exclusive to our

company," he added, showing off a wall of Thomas the Tank Engine clothing.

Adams left the store with Thomas pajamas, four new Thomas train cars and doubts about finding a comparable source for her son's toy collection.

But Sandy Sygiel of Berkley isn't worried.

She suggests shopping Noodle Kidoodle stores.

"It's a wonderful program. Your kids either like it or they don't," said Sygiel, who bought several Thomas items at The Great Train Store last week.

Aaron, her 3-year-old, does. "He's got about \$1,110 worth," Sygiel said, quickly adding "mostly from his grandparents."

Andrea Guttilla of Beverly Hills bought a collectible engine from the store. She's confident other shops will carry train toys for her son, Alessandro, 3.

"I am sad it's closing. It's a nice store," she added.

Parents can find Thomas toys at: Adventures in Toys, Birmingham; Brighter Toy Store, Canton Township; Noodle Kidoodle store; Store of Knowledge; Toys-R-Us stores (plastic cars only); The Learning Tree stores and Toys International, Auburn Hills.

Children's book author visits Rochester store

BY SHARON DARGAY
STAFF WRITER

Cammie Mannino remembers the first time children's author and illustrator Patricia Polacco visited her downtown Rochester book store.

"Hardly anyone knew her name. That was about 10 years ago. We've watched her crowds grow and grow as the years have gone on," Mannino says. "This is the fourth time she's come here."

This time, Mannino expects an overflow crowd for the Union City, N.J. author. She'll sign books and talk about her work on June 4 at Mannino's store, Halfway Down the Stairs.

"Meeting her is like eating a big bowl of hearty soup," Mannino says. "She's a deeply moral, thoughtful and wonderfully funny and warm person."
"She is one of the most gifted story-

tellers I've ever met in my life. She's one of those rare people with the ability to tell stories orally and translate it into print. Hearing her in person is a major treat for the audience. She'll leave you with tears in your eyes."

Polacco's latest book, *The Butterfly*, tells the story of her great-aunt, Marcel, a member of the French Resistance in Nazi-occupied France.

"Almost every book is based on someone in her family or someone she knows," Mannino explained. "With Irish Christians on one side of her family and the other side being Russian Jewish, she comes from two great storytelling traditions."

Mannino recommends *The Butterfly* for fourth and fifth graders because of the book's serious topic.

Picture books, which traditionally have appealed to first and second

graders, found a new audience in older elementary school children during the past decade.

"There are a lot of thoughtful topics you can do in picture books for older children. A lot of great writing has come out of books like this."

Polacco's presentation at Halfway Down the Stairs is appropriate for first graders through adults.

"It's not a story buy. This is her talking about her work. But she's warm and funny and children love her."

Mannino brings a handful of children's book authors and illustrators into her store every year. Many of them make Halfway Down the Stairs their only book tour stop in southeastern Michigan.

"I've been fortunate. It's a combination of knowing some very nice people

in publishing and three months after I opened I had (children's author) Eric Carl in. His publisher sold tons of books. It allowed us to establish a track record."

Polacco will talk about her work and autograph books at 12:30 p.m. at the store, located on Fourth Street, just east of Main.

The shop is one of three stops in Michigan on Polacco's book tour.



Patricia Polacco

Retail, style and special store events are listed in this calendar. Please send information to: **Malls & Mainstreets**, c/o Observer & Eccentric Newspapers, 805 East Maple, Birmingham, MI 48009. Fax: (248) 644-1314. Information must be received by 5 p.m. Monday for publication the following Sunday.

SUNDAY, MAY 28

OUT OF THIS WORLD
Space Adventure, an interactive technology display continues through June 9 at Oakland Mall in Troy. Shoppers can take an interactive walk through the International Space Station, see satellite photos of their home, explore a Star Lab Planetarium and take a gyroscope ride. Hours are 3-8 p.m., week days, noon to 8 p.m., Saturdays and noon to 5 p.m., Sundays.

SEWING SALE
Look for bargains from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. at the final day of Livonia Mall's sidewalk sales. Shoppers also have a chance to win a \$260 shopping spree at the mall.

ADDED ATTRACTIONS

WEDNESDAY, MAY 31

MAKE-UP ADVICE
A special representative from Clarins will be on hand from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. at the Clarins Skin-care Center at Saks Fifth Avenue, Somerset Collection, Troy. For appointments call 248-614-3364.

THURSDAY, JUNE 1

GIVING BACK
Hudson's at Oakland Mall will donate one percent of the profits from the sale of oriental rugs today to Boys & Girls Club of Troy. The sale continues through June 5.

ARTS AND CRAFTS
Check out Westland Shopping Center's *Made in America* arts and crafts show today through June 4. Artisans from across the country will demonstrate and sell their work, including paintings,

stained glass, wood furniture, jewelry, decorative painting, doll clothing, ceramics, toy puzzles and more. The center is located at 3500 Warren, Westland.

PHOTO DISPLAY
Third and fourth graders from six Livonia elementary school classes, will show their photography at Laurel Park Place Mall in Livonia through June 14. Farmington photographer Monte Nagler led workshops in photography basics in their classes and Laurel Park Place Mall gave each student a disposable camera last month. The mall will display their works along with Nagler's photos.

ATURDAY, JUNE 3

ANIMALS ALL AROUND
Olde World Canterbury Village in Lake Orion will sponsor animal training demonstrations, handling procedures and more at *Funs on Parade*. The one-day event will include a petting zoo, face painting and caricature artist. (248) 991-6700.