

Holiday shopping in downtown Traverse City

From fine art to fudge, custom designed jewelry to autographed books by Michigan authors, earth-friendly products for the home to children's clothing, there's little you can't find in downtown Traverse City, which is home to more than 150 unique stores, services, and restaurants.

And because many of them are staffed by owners and employees who pride themselves on personal, customized service, the chances are excellent that you'll not only find the perfect gift for those on your shopping list, but a few things you'd enjoy receiving, as well.

"I think you can find something for anybody, and enjoy your holiday shopping in an atmosphere that's festive and friendly," said Marcia Bellinger, owner of Belstone Gallery, a store offering a distinctive collection of art, glass, jewelry, metal, pottery, and wood.

"Shoppers come here from all over the world, and they say what they love about our downtown is the uniqueness of the stores, and the quality of person-

al attention and interest in the customer. And you can't beat it when a light snow is falling and the lights are sparkling in the trees."

This year, shoppers to downtown will find a number of new stores, and others that have relocated to new and often expanded spaces. Both groups have added new vitality to the mix of downtown stores.

The former category includes Fetish, an upscale boutique for women featuring fine clothing, shoes, and accessories, that is located at 139 East Front Street. Momentum, located at 225 East Front has a constantly changing line of brand names and resort wear discounted from 40-70% daily. Alpaca Connection, at 121 East Front, carries an array of Alpaca rugs, pillows, sweaters, and specialty tees. And Green Island has an extensive collection of earth-friendly and environmentally safe products for home, bath, and baby in their store at 116 South Union.

Several other stores have recently changed their address-

es, which has also meant the ability to offer new products and services.

The Cherry Stop, a one-stop store for all things cherry with a full-service mail order component, can now be found at 211 East Front Street. Raven's Child and Wings, two stores with women's clothing and trendy fashions for younger shoppers, respectively, just moved under one roof at 220 East Front. Trains & Things Hobbies, which carries model railroad and construction supplies, moved from its longtime home next to the City Opera House to 210 East Front, next to the new spot for Annie's. Now at 208 East Front, Annie's, which specializes in cards, gift baskets, balloons, toys, and gourmet coffees and candies, was part of a devastating fire this past March, which forced their relocation and rebuilding for neighbor Kilwin's. Kilwin's expanded their space at 129 East Front to offer even more homemade candies, fudge, and ice cream. Harbor Wear, at 125 East Front, is temporarily closed, but

will be rebuilt and re-opened in 2003. In the meantime, their nautical and "up north" clothing for the entire family can be ordered at their website at www.harborwear.com.

The downtown shopping district takes in the 100, 200 and 300 blocks of East Front, the 100-500 blocks of West Front, State Street, and Union and Cass Streets up to Eighth Street. Within those boundaries, shoppers can find antique and art galleries, clothing, books, cards and stationery, crafts and toys, gifts and collectibles, food specialty stores, jewelry, music, home furnishings, shows and accessories, sporting goods.

There is a reward for shoppers who tally receipts from downtown stores that come to \$250 or more. Now in its 10th year, the Downtown Traverse City Association (DTCA) makes available a limited edition holiday ornament featuring a historical downtown building. For 2002, it is the Grand Traverse Heritage Center, the longtime site of the Traverse Area District Library.

The bulbs can be acquired for \$ receipts from downtown stores dated after 1/4/02. They are available at the DTCA Office at 123 West Front Street across from the Record Eagle from Monday-Friday 8:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m. or at Nautical Works at 102 East Front Street and Annie's at 208 East Front Street during their business hours and on weekends.

A frequently asked question is about the general schedule of shopping hours for stores. The DTCA office says that most stores abide by the following schedule: Monday- Wednesday 10:00 a.m. - 6:00 p.m., Thursday-Friday 10:00 a.m. - 8:00 p.m., Saturday 10:00 a.m. - 6:00 p.m., and Sunday 12:00 - 5:00 p.m. Two weeks before Christmas through Christmas Eve, the stores will offer extended holiday hours of Monday- Saturday 10:00 a.m. - 9:00 p.m. and Sunday 12:00 - 5:00 p.m.

The DTCA office says that shoppers are also curious about where and how to park downtown. One popular service has

become the free valet parking that is available on Saturdays from November 30-December 21.

Gil Rupp, who heads Auto Parking Services (APS) for the City of Traverse City says that shoppers simply need to pull up to the State Theatre, next to Horizon Books in the 200 Block of East Front, and look for the valet parkers in tuxedos who will take cars to a supervised lot, and then returned when your shopping is completed. "There is also free parking in specially designated, two hour metered lots," said Rupp. "We'll have this going on through New Year's Eve, so just look for the signs."

One final suggestion for that person on your list who has everything is to give Downtown Traverse City gift certificates, which look like checks and are used like cash, and are accepted at most all downtown locations. The certificates come in \$5, \$10 and \$20 denominations. They can be purchased at the DTCA office by cash, check or credit card.



Pla•mon•don Shoes
144 East Front Street - 947-5091

Open: 9-8pm • Saturday 9-5:30 • Sunday 12-4pm

Americana Collection of Traverse City



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by
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for Clayworks

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