

# 'Tis The Season

Watch for the second gift guide next Thursday

A SUPPLEMENT TO THE RECORD-EAGLE

November 27, 2003

WWW.RECORD-EAGLE.COM

WHAT'S INSIDE

## What's hot in toys this holiday season

BY HEATHER JOHNSON DUROCHER  
Special to the Record-Eagle

Buying for the children on your holiday gift list isn't always easy considering the ever-increasing toy choices available. And not to mention how difficult it can be to keep up on the kid must-haves of the season. Whether the youngster you're buying for is into the latest and greatest, or you're in search of a toy that's proven popular with children year after year, the following ideas from area merchants are sure to be hits.

**Hot stuff**

Among the toys for girls expected to fly off the shelves this holiday season are Strawberry Shortcake dolls and accessories, as well as Care Bears stuffed animals — both lines of toys which are making come-

backs since their heyday in the early 1980s.

Other top choices for girls?

"Anything Swan Lake Barbie," said Mark Chmielewski, toy department manager at Meijer in Traverse City. "Also Bratz dolls. They were big last year and they're going to be big again this year."

For boys, Chmielewski predicted video games, especially "Lord of the Rings," "Return of the King" to be huge. Another hot seller, he says, are "The Fast and Furious" cars, figures, race sets and die-cast sets, which are based on the popular movie.

At downtown Traverse City's Dandelion Clothing & Gifts For Kids, Groovy Girls continue to be favorites, said store owner Kirstin Stiebel.

"We have people buying  
See HOT, Page 5 ▶



Record-Eagle/Meegan M. Reid

A toy display at Traverse City's Dandelion store includes Groovy Girls, Mezosaurus, Plan Toys and Twisted Form.



Holiday gifts for the younger set

— Page 3



Volunteerism & charity are fine forms of giving

— Page 5



Shopping in scenic Leelanau County

— Page 7

Christmas cards designed by children

— Page 7

Special Sections Editor Rick Gould can be reached at 933-1407 or by e-mail: rgould@record-eagle.com

BY JILL JENKINS  
Special to the Record-Eagle

Decorating for Christmas begins and ends with the tree. The other adornments — big air-filled snowmen, outdoor lights, and Santa's sled — are fun, but they don't compare to finding the perfect tree.

While the "perfect tree" is different for everyone, local Christmas tree farmers Richard Schmuckal and Dennis Covell say the species that is becoming the most popular is the Fraser Fir.

"It's the very nicest tree you can buy," said Schmuckal whose family owns Schmuckal Tree Farm. "It's very green, but it has a bluish-green tint to the underside (of the branches). It has very stiff branches. It retains needles better, and it's very soft."

The trees are native to North Carolina, but Schmuckal is able to grow them in northern Michigan with a special irrigation system.

Covell, owner of Covell

Tree Farm, says the Fraser Fir is called the "Cadillac of Christmas trees" by those who work in the industry.

"The most popular Christmas tree today is the Fraser Fir," said Covell, who doesn't grow the aromatic species but does have some available for sale each year. "They are considered to be a premium tree. They're pretty hard to beat."

But it's more than just picking out the best tree; for many, putting up the Christmas tree symbolizes the start of the holiday season. And more and more often, families are choosing to enhance the activity of picking out a Christmas tree.

Rather than picking a tree from a parking lot display, families are opting to make the trek to local tree farms to choose and cut a tree.

"(According to the) National Christmas Tree Growers Association and the Michigan Christmas Tree Growers Association, choose-and-cut is the fastest growing phase of the Christmas tree industry,"

Schmuckal said. "It's the most fun part of our operation."

Covell agrees. "We've seen an increase over the last five years. It's quite a lot."

One reason for the increase could be the effort made by tree farms like Schmuckal's and Covell's. Bonfires, Christmas music, and hot chocolate are just some of the extras people enjoy at the tree farms.

"The two basic reasons a family will come to a farm like ours is to secure the freshest tree they possibly can and to provide their family with an experience they will remember," Schmuckal said. "That's what we're trying to achieve — to create an experience. It's something your kids will talk about and, hopefully, you will come back year after year."

Covell believes that's just what happens. "I know of several families who come back year after year," he said. "It's a family activity. Most of the time it's

See FRASER, Page 11 ▶



The Fraser Fir



Down Booties  
Santa's cure for cold feet!  
\$24.95



The Willow Comforter  
Our newest affordable OVERSIZED MIDWEIGHT comforter. 260+ thread count, 100% Cambic cotton cover, 525+ fill power white European down.

TWIN  
compare at \$250  
68 x 88, 25 oz.  
\$119

QUEEN  
compare at \$300  
88 x 98, 36 oz.  
\$159

KING  
compare at \$320  
107 x 98, 42 oz.  
\$179

Outdoor Adventures  
DOWN OUTLET

Holiday Savings of 30% - 60%

Open Seven Days A Week  
Mon - Sat. 9:30 - 8:00  
Sunday 10:00 - 5:00

M-72 E. in Acme, Across from the Grand Traverse Resort  
231-938-9779

www.downoutlet.com

Soft Down Pillows made in USA

550+ fill power downfill  
Compare at \$65

\$29.95



Wonderfully Warm!

Choose from a large selection of ladies full length down coats.

Compare at \$180. - \$240.  
Our Price

\$139.95

To \$169.95

