

Shopping with the your college student can benefit you, too

BY SALLY D. KETCHUM
Special to the Record-Eagle

All parents know those mixed feelings sending kids off to school — kindergarten, high school and worst — to college because the kids might make a home elsewhere after those four years.

Of course, there are happy aspects of the annual school send-off: the anticipation, the excitement and the shopping trips, in early years for crayons and safety scissors and finally, for the college freshman, sheets and soap, pillows and perhaps even a mattress.

During the last stage, parents often feel as if they are tagging along, not only to say, "No" to the iPod because you really do need shoes, but to supply the credit card at check out.

The question, "Why should kids have all the fun?" has an answer: Shop with them; consider spin-offs of dorm purchases as suggestions for the parents and their home. Following the college-

bound kid for a few aisles makes it easy to get the hang of it, getting ideas that might (or might not) work for the parents' home. Consider spin-offs like these:

■ **The student:** Crates that become lugs, furniture and storage. Parents: Would a crate of to be useful for garage or basement?

■ **The student:** Bed, toss and body pillows. There's great variety in fabrics. Parents: Nice addition to the den sofa in corduroy, and sure — a flannel one for Fido, too. With dog beds costing up to \$200, \$9.99 seems like a good deal!

■ **The student:** Twin size sheets. Tip: Look for Twin XL (most dorm mattresses are now extra long now). Parents: August is White Sale month; look for great reductions on Queen and King size sheet sets for home.

■ **The student:** Hot CDs. White Stripes? Outkast? The parents: Orff's "Carmina Burana," after all the Traverse Symphony Orchestra and combined

NMC choruses will present the popular secular cantata this spring.

■ **Student:** Yearns for that photo-taking cell phone. Parents: Idea — save on a family plan for the billing.

■ **Student:** Towels and grooming needs. Parents: Ask the kids for the latest; they are always up on the newest, hippest lotions and potions.

■ **Student:** Medium (room type) refrigerator. Calling the housing department of the college is very helpful. You can learn what is, and what is not, furnished. Most colleges also have rental systems for refrigerators, but when you consider the cost and the inconvenience of returning them during finals week, it's smart to buy your own — one more item to have for that first apartment. Parents: Would a small fridge be helpful in the office, the rec room or even the garage? They are useful for parties and couch potato days, too.

■ **Student:** Sophomores and upperclassmen in the

dorm know that the single most important item for college is a good mattress. (A good reason to get to the dorm early, before the roommate. Sounds selfish, but students get very little sleep so that sleep should be sound.) If the bringing a mattress — extra long — if possible, splurge on quality when buying it. Such an item is a boon as an extra bed in a first apartment four years later. Networking young people have constant visitors. Parents: Scan bedding deals for the home. Beware re-making the student's room at home. Homesick kids like to return to their haunts as they left them.

Many students know how small college rooms are and the helpful practice of building lofts for sleeping. A trip to the lumberyard before starting off is a good idea, along with bringing dad's tools, know-how and muscle power. Consider wood for more bookcases for the home. Most homes have more books than room for them.

With the attractive prices on back-to-school specials, it's a good time to think of Christmas. Shoppers can not only find stocking stuffers and small items that might please just about everyone, but also parents might con-

sider buying something the departing student would truly like, but can be held off to Christmas without inconvenience.

Sally D. Ketchum is a freelance writer and columnist.

SCHOOL FACTS

The other big shopping season

Back-to-school season is coming and students aren't just buying pencils and binders anymore. According to a consumer spending poll, nearly half of consumers intend to purchase consumer electronics such as computers, cell phones and calculators.

Percent of back-to-school shoppers will buy:



Value and price remain the top purchase influencers for back-to-school spending.

■ 78% of all respondents say value and price will influence what they will buy.

■ 59% buy items that are required by school.

■ 31% buy items that are trendy or fashionable.

SOURCE: The NPD Group online consumer panel poll of approx. 17,500 females and 5,000 males from July 22 through August 6, 2004.

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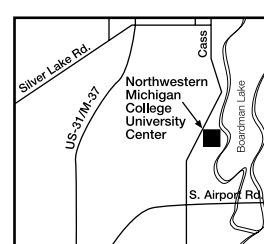
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