

Kids focus on fashion in adult eyewear

With the start of the school year, all eyes — and new eyewear styles — are on kids.

Sparked by the growing interest in fashion eyewear for adults, manufacturers have "downsized" many of the best-selling adult frames for the school-age set.

The result is a selection of some of the most contemporary eyeglasses and sunglasses that the children's eyewear mar-

ket has seen in a long time.

Miniature versions of the popular Ray-Ban "Wayfarers," the Porsche Carrera glasses, and the Paul Michel line are showing up increasingly on small faces.

"Most youngsters still like the 'goggle look,'" says Cathy Kaye, fashion eyewear buyer for Sterling Optical, which has more than 220 stores in 25 states and Washington, D.C.

Manufacturers have stepped up their

production of children's eyewear, and the larger retail chains such as Sterling, notes Ms. Kaye, typically carry "more than two dozen styles of frames for children from eight to 14."

In addition to being more stylish than their predecessors, today's eyeglasses for kids are sturdier than ever.

"Most of the more popular frames for children are now designed with spring-hinge temples," Ms. Kaye says. "These resist the bending and rough treatment that many children give their glasses."

To improve further the odds on longevity for a child's eyeglasses, "eye-ties" — nylon cords that attach to eyeglass temples and go around the wearer's head — are often given by some opticians automatically with every pair of frames for children, Ms. Kaye notes.

As do their parents, today's youngsters favor bold colors and shapes for their eyewear.

Plastic frames in blue or red are replacing the more traditional black, brown, or clear frames; girls, in particular, are attracted to the "grown-up" styling in lines such as the Paul Michel selection, says Sterling's Cathy Kaye.

What effect has the increase in youngsters wearing contact lenses had on the market for eyeglasses?

"Most older children we see who have contact lenses," says Ms. Kaye, "still keep a pair of glasses around for times they don't feel like cleaning and caring for their contacts."

"Children sometimes prefer slipping on a pair of glasses rather than performing the rituals associated with caring for their contact lenses."



RESPONDING TO THE POPULARITY of movie stars and athletes who wear sunglasses, Sterling Optical is marketing children's-sized versions of the "preppy" and Porsche Carrera styles.



THE VIVID PRINTED Jeweled Heart collection from E. J. Gitano is adorned with glitter and designed in an array of great fashion shapes. This soft group of cotton/poly separates is available in sizes 4-14 and young junior.

CLASS RING ADDS A TOUCH OF CLASS TO SCHOOL DAYS

It's fun! It's fashionable! It's you! It's a class ring...the "classiest" concept in back-to-school accessories. And according to ArtCarved Class Rings, a leading school ring manufacturer, the best time to purchase a class ring is back-to-school time, so that you can enjoy it throughout the school year.

Speaking of enjoyment, you'll love designing your very own class ring, with virtually unlimited choices of personalization features available.

Just as no two students are alike, neither should class rings be the same. From the spellout to the gemstone to the mascot to the activity feature, your class ring will tell the world who you are in one glorious, golden circle.

A class ring also represents tradition: A tradition that started in 1835, when the West Point cadets donned one of the very first class rings. Since then, back-to-schoolers have been wearing class rings with the same sentiment and pride, whether they choose the traditional oval or a contemporary style with diamonds.

High school class rings are available from your local jeweler, whose professional know-how will ensure that your ring will fit and feel the way it should.

College class rings are sold in campus bookstores, where trained personnel can readily assist you at all times.

Something as traditional and individual as a class ring should last a lifetime, so make sure it comes with a full lifetime warranty. The most comprehensive, such as ArtCarved's, will include free resizing, refinishing, stone replacement, cleaning and changes in graduation year.

So, as you're getting ready to go back to school, remember this: Your class ring is a mirror of the most special time of your life. As the yearbook fades and the diploma yellows, your class ring will shine forever with school memories.

Fit tips for children's shoes

When buying children's shoes, parents are urged to make proper fit a key consideration, say shoe industry experts.

"Before children skip off to school or anywhere else, parents should make sure they do so in quality shoes that fit properly," says Stephen Cassidy, children's shoes buying vice president at Kinney Shoe Corporation.

Doctors report that, because the bones in children's feet are malleable and soft and are still growing, it is extremely important to fit their shoes correctly.

"Quality construction and materials contribute to a good fit," says Mr. Cassidy. "Leather is an excellent choice because it provides support without restricting the foot, and it's also a very durable, breathable material."

To ensure proper fit, Kinney has developed a program called "Cert-A-Fit," in which the salesperson checks children's shoe fit six ways: For toe room, heel fit, width, arch length, top-line fit and walk

test comfort. The fit is then double-checked by another salesperson.

In addition to "Cert-A-Fit," Kinney offers the following tips to help parents assure good shoe fit for their children:

- Have both feet measured;
- Have the child wear the socks to be used with the new shoes;
- Fit the larger foot;
- Have fit checked when the child is standing and both shoes are completely laced;
- Press the toe area with the thumb; there should be about 1/8 inch between the end of the longest toe and the tip of the shoe;
- Test the width of the shoe by pinching the upper material around the ball of the foot and pulling it up at the vamp; there should be about 1/4 inch of "extra" material;
- Be certain the ball of the foot is at the widest part of the shoe.



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