

Local businesses ready for last-minute Christmas rush

By FANNIE SUNSHINE

The Champion

With Christmas a week away, shoppers are swarming malls and shops trying to find those perfect gifts for the people they love.

And although the real Christmas rush has yet to begin, stores have already basked from the benefits of early holiday shoppers.

"Christmas-related decorations are a huge seller this year," said David Shuvera, general manager of Milton's Canadian Tire.

Automotive tools, toys, household appliances and electronics are also selling nicely, he said.

"It's a little challenging because a month ago, we normally would have had a big snow fall. The snow-related items are a little slow getting off the shelves, but we know the snow will come and we're well stocked."

Because of the lack of snow, sales are about even with this time last year, Mr. Shuvera added.

"I haven't seen a panic of shoppers yet," he joked. "We're hoping to have another great Christmas season."

Scott Weir, manager of the town's Zellers store, said this past week has seen a big jump in sales.

"Last year with the cold weather, we sold more snow items, like shovels and windshield washer

fluid, mits and hats. (Sales) are a little down in that department but everything else is up."

Popular Christmas gifts this year include Holiday Barbie, toys, clothing, Christmas decorations and electronics.

"XBOX, PlayStation 2, movies, DVD players and DVDs are flying," he said.

"We realize we're one of the only major retailers in Milton and we really try to please our customers. We want them to keep shopping here in town, we don't want to send them away."

XBOX popular

And what was popular last year might not be the cat's meow this year.

"Scooters were popular last year. This year it's XBOX. The Holiday Barbie and Hot Wheels always do well year after year."

Although sales are up from last year, it would be even better if the weather would cool down, Mr. Weir said.

For Fiona Kennedy, owner of Nature's Fire on Main Street, Christmas is a big time of year for the children's store.

"For the girls, the Groovy Girls line is popular. The boys like Thomas the Train."

On most occasions, parents will come into the store with their children to make their Christmas list

and come back another day to buy it without the kids, she said.

"My store doesn't deal in fad items," Ms Kennedy said.

"I like classics, something kids have to use their imagination for. It's the neatest feeling when kids say, 'Mom, this is the coolest store'."

Since the beginning of the month, the store has been busy with eager Christmas shoppers.

"I think between now and next week the rush will start," she said. "It's nice to see a lot of Milton people shopping locally. A lot of people living in the new developments are checking out the stores in town."

And people aren't only shopping for toys, clothing and video games.

"Engagement rings are always popular," said Anita Mangotich, owner of Halton Hills Fine Jewellery (formerly the Gold Connection).

"This year, our leather jewelry boxes are popular. We extended our line from last year and they've been selling well."

Along with rings, diamond stud earrings, watches and pewter ornaments are selling well this time of year, she said.

"Most people are buying for their significant other. People usually have an idea of what they want, but they don't have anything specific in mind."

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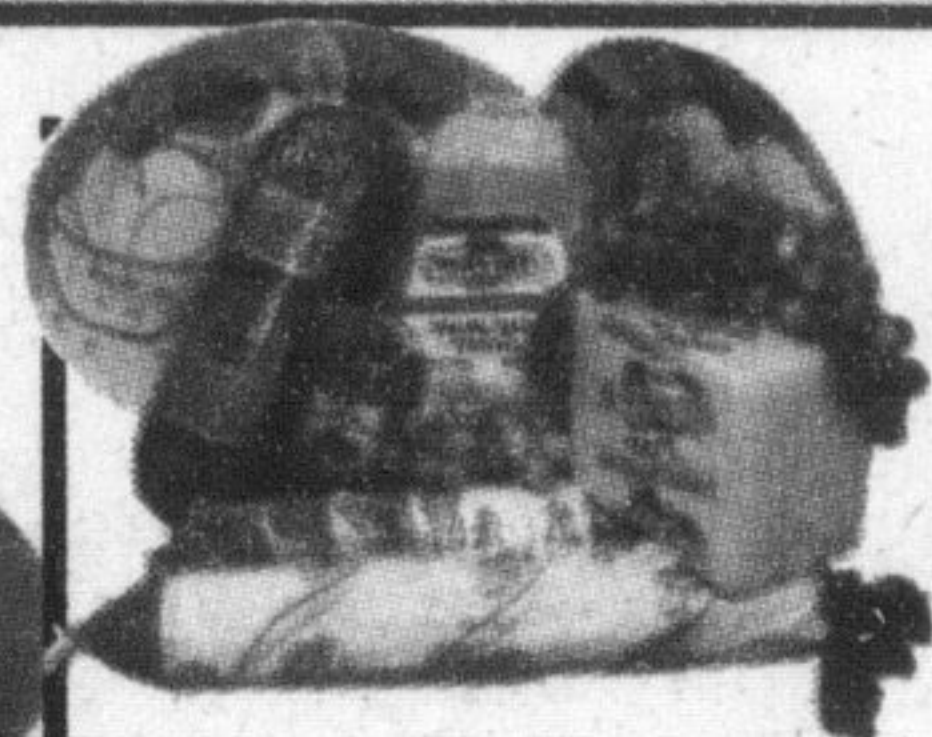
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Saturday 8:30 am-6 pm

Sunday 9:00 am-5 pm

