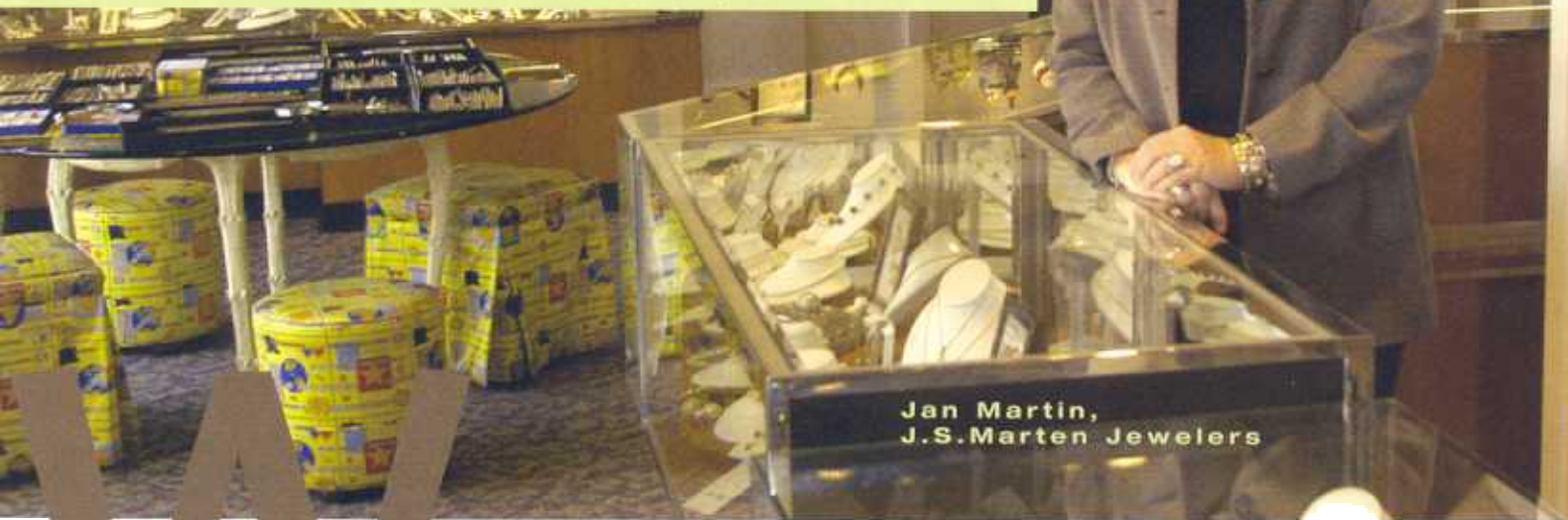


Christmas 2002

# Anybody's guess

By Shari Held

Will the ghost of Christmas past influence retailers this holiday season?



**W**e are hoping for a good solid Christmas," says Toomie Farris, president and COO of McNamara Florists. "After last year's many challenges, this year has got to be better!"

Experts are anticipating a modest increase in sales. Shopping Centers Today reports Michael P. Niemira, an analyst with the Bank of Tokyo-Mitsubishi, has predicted that holiday chain-store sales could increase by nearly 4 percent from last year. But war with Iraq could slice that increase to a mere 2 percent.

With uncertainty surrounding the upcoming holiday season, retailers must forge ahead with marketing strategies based on general market speculation and optimism tempered with a dash of pessimism — or vice versa. And, all must consider their recent sales history.

Maintaining the status quo is possibly the safest strategy. "Retailers will continue to be aggressive and will heavily market as usual with promotions looking the same as in other years," says Grant Monahan, president of the Indiana Retail Council.

"We have prepared relatively optimistically for the holidays," says Farris, citing the double-digit sales figures experienced in recent months. "It's important - - even though last

year was not a record-setter — that we have a good selection." He is counting on this holiday season having more meaning for people and has targeted "things that are comforting, classic and traditional" as the top trends. McNamara's latest store opening in Johnson County will drive "a significant part" of its holiday campaign, but the marketing budget will be similar to last year. Besides traditional print and radio media, McNamara's is offering intimate campaigns and promotions to selected clients and groups.

Traditionally, Target relies on Sunday ad circulars. And business as usual is the theme for the Carmel/Westfield Target store. "We have nothing unusual or different scheduled [for the holidays] at this point," says Tom Pankratz, store team leader.

Joe Husar, co-owner of Kahn's Fine Wines Marketplace, handles the food and catering side of Kahn's business. He speculates that Christmas retail in general will be "flat or down" but is optimistic that his business will be good. Since purchasing The Montage catering facility last year, Kahn's is one of the largest and fastest-growing caterers in the area.

"I think holiday catering will be up for us just because we've been in the market for a few years." While Kahn's isn't planning any "spectacular or special" promotions this year, "I don't

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featured at both of AMLI's current developments: AMLI at Carmel Center, scheduled for completion next spring, and AMLI at Old Town Carmel, which just broke ground in October. Old Town, located along the Monon Trail, boasts one of the trendiest locations in Carmel. With a completion date of fall 2004, Old Town will have its own retail center featuring restaurants, bars and other services.

"Besides their location next to the Monon, the interior finishings — cultured marble vanities, crown molding and interior columns— make them more like single-family homes than traditional apartments," say Jim Thomas, executive vice president of AMLI Residential Construction. Proposed prices range from \$760 to almost \$1,800 a month. But residents will get location, luxury and convenience for that price.

"These units are designed with relocating executives and 'building-at-home' renters in mind," says Thomas. Loft-style, urban interiors with exposed brick and extra-tall ceilings make these apartments appealing alternatives to detached housing. "Four-bedroom town home units are unusual in today's rental market," he says. Four-bedroom town homes with attached garages are available in both AMLI communities.

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**CUTS** (continued from page 13)

## **Dress up your personal appearance**

Hair appointments to spiff up for a big meeting or a new suit don't pass the litmus test, says Rebecca Lively, owner of Arthur Guy & Company. If you require a special apron or outfit in the salon, that may pass inspection, but the rule of thumb is that if you can wear it in public every day, no dice.

## **Take a vacation**

True, vacations offer a mother lode of deductions for the self-employed, but you must legitimately mix them with business. For instance, did you travel in conjunction with trade shows, seminars or continuing education courses? Or, if the purpose behind your skiing trip was to consult with Colorado's professionals in your industry, better have records that you called ahead to arrange meetings

before you write off those miles, meals and lodging expenses, says Fairbrother. The key to achieving tax write-offs, he adds, also lies in devoting a few hours each day to business; the slopes will be there when you return.

## **Buy anything the business needs**

After all, you only need so many computers, furniture, security systems and equipment upgrades before you begin to replace perfectly acceptable equipment in a tax dance shuffle. "I have to tell many of my clients they spend so freely they should be in Congress," Weingardt laughs. "Worry about business first; consider tax implications second." Consider the depreciation route in years when profits are down; save the sugar rush for years when the tax bill is high.

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**ANYBODY'S** (continued from page 15)

see us making any cuts either," says Husar. Kahn's relies on its Christmas newsletter, Web site, print and radio ads and street signage to pique customers' interest.

The Dec. 1 1-percent sales tax increase might entice retailers of high-end items to change their strategies. "Some may promote around the increase; most will probably take the change as another variable in their business," says Monahan.

"I imagine that before the actual changeover, people who are motivated will get whatever it is that they are thinking about, but it probably won't be a deciding factor for our clientele," says Sam H. Sipe, CEO of J.C. Sipe Jewelers.

Sipe has doubled its marketing efforts this year with radio spots and direct mail to its clientele. The main reason is that it has moved its location and wants to make sure all its clients know where to find the store. "The other issue is that I probably would have anyway because we've found it to be very beneficial," says Sipe, who is hopeful that this season will be "wonderful."

"People are back to family and friends and are buying personalized gifts. That is our specialty," says Jan S. Marten, owner of J.S. Marten Jewelers. This year, besides direct mail, traditional ads and flyers and personalized notes, she is relying on the company Web site to communicate with customers.

Marten is adding more lines of jewelry to the selection since it recently expanded its store. "We are anticipating that this Christmas will be our best ever," says Marten.

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**CUSTOM** (continued from page 21)

any physician, you treat patients based on physical findings." In other words, commonalities come into play: Certain injuries and pain complaints produce physical findings to verify them.

It's easy to see why businesses built around physical labor — be it a local pizza chain or a transportation company — sign up, but Stickney advises anyone Indiana law requires to carry workers' compensation to establish an account with an occupational health center. The future holds enough promising services that even the self-employed, home-based crowd stands a chance of cashing in on the opportunities:

- Drug testing represents the main branch developed in the 1990s, says Stickney. This includes everything from pre-employment screening to FAA-regulated periodic tests or random checks.
- Ergonomic intervention: Methodist maintains a software-tracking program to store data on ergonomic injuries. Officials here can flag injuries by body parts, by work site, even by department codes at a participating company's request. "By breaking it down, we can go out to the site and do an ergonomic assessment, make recommendations on how to reduce the injuries," Harman notes.
- Equipment manufacturers, in their quest to stay abreast of the medical community's growing occupational health knowledge, continuously introduce new items on the market.

According to Jeff Worrell, president of Advantage Medical in Carmel, the manufacturers currently are making strides in simulating or duplicating work activities in the medical setting where medical personnel can supervise and retrain where necessary.

"I joke that we're in the business of putting ourselves out of business," Harman says. "But improve workers' comp costs and your bottom line improves. Every employer is looking to do that in a soft economy where the profit margins are down."