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Stores Continued from Page 7B

two-foot-by-a-foot-and-a-half card with lace and holograms all over it and is surprised it doesn't cost a buck," Brence said.

But the worst are the women with small, screaming children.

"People are there buying cards telling them how much they love them, and they're there slapping their kids, telling them to shut up and stop their squawling," King said.

Brence said these women will ogle the store's collectible porcelain statues while simultaneously disciplining their kids. The effect is jarring, as Brence demonstrated: "Isn't that precious? Shut up you little *!@#*!@!* Oh, isn't that cute? Do I have to slap you?"

"The kid's screaming for attention, and they're paying more attention to these gaudy little porcelain dolls than to their kid," King said.

It's also bad to be surrounded by a crush of people in love if you're single, said Chouinard, who's just recent-



Photo by Andre Rainieri

It's no fun to clean up after 650 to 800 customers a day.

ly engaged herself. "I would not want to be single right now. Just about everybody's buying cards for somebody they're with, or somebody they like a whole lot." She said it's tough to work in that environment when you're lonely.

But many maintain that's a larger problem with Valentine's Day itself, a sentiment

Brence shares. He's not getting anybody anything for the holiday.

"I will not spend a penny. Not so much because I have a problem with the merchandise, but because you should express these romantic sentiments every day," Brence said. "Hallmark didn't invent Valentine's Day, but they're exploiting it for all it's worth."

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