

Fred Meyer sock sale a beloved frenzy

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Mary Beth Baker has worked enough Fred Meyer sock sales to see just about everything. A co-worker falling into a play pen of socks. Others trapped behind doors as shoppers rushed into the store. A loyal customer waxing poetic about the sale.

"It's actually my favorite day of the year, without a question," said Baker, a 47-year veteran who's been with Fred Meyer since before the first sock sale.

For 37 years, the Black Friday event — where all socks are half-price — has been an Oregon family tradition that can quickly devolve into shopping chaos.

Customers who love it return year after year, bringing family members along for early-morning adventures.

Fred Meyer expects to sell about 1.2 million socks this year across all of its stores in Oregon, Washington, Alaska and Idaho, spokesman Jeffery Temple told the Statesman Journal. That would be on par with previous Black Fridays.

The sale started long after Fred. G. Meyer moved to Portland in 1908 and eventually founded the first Fred Meyer store in 1922.

Fast forward to 1980, when the company kicked off its sock sale as a holiday challenge and a fun event for customers and employees.

"The first one was absolutely a zoo," Baker said. The store had never done something like that before, she said.

"The customers loved it. And every year it just got better and better, and bigger and bigger," she said.



Shoppers look through the many piles of socks on sale at the Fred Meyer on Market and Lancaster during last year's Black Friday. For 37 years, the Black Friday event — where all socks are half-price — has been an Oregon family tradition. MOLLY J. SMITH / STATESMAN JOURNAL

'Oh my god, this is tradition'

The same customers started coming back year after year. "Pretty soon, it got to be where customers were saying, 'Oh my god, this is tradition,'" Baker said.

She said one customer wrote a poem about the sock sale on Thanksgiving, then came into the store and read it aloud to employees.

"We just cracked up," Baker said, though she couldn't remember how the poem went.

Employees used to empty socks into playpens for the sale. At least one time, an employee fell into a pen they were filling, said Baker, now an apparel coordinator for 21 Fred Meyer stores.

Employees end up finding socks all over the store long after the sale ends. "You find socks for weeks everywhere," Baker said.

Customers have their own chaotic sto-

ries.

"Craziest thing my daughter recalled seeing was a woman dive into the table full of socks," said Kimberly Jones, of Salem. "That's her fondest memory."

Jones says she has gone for at least the last six years.

Last year, Jones got so excited about the sale that she passed up the free food.CQ

"When the doors opened it's a mad dash to where they've set up tables with boxes and boxes of socks," she said.

She rushed to the socks with a battle plan: White socks for one son, black for the other. Wool socks for one daughter, and colorful, no-show ones for the other. For her husband, it's dress socks.

'She hit my mother-in-law with her cane'

About 13 years ago, Carole Ashworth

was with her former mother-in-law when an elderly woman started grabbing socks from their cart.

The two urged the woman to stop. "She hit my mother-in-law with her cane," then took off with the socks, Ashworth said.

It was a what-the-heck moment, but "we just let it go," she said.

At least every two years, Ashworth drives about an hour from her home in Sheridan to the Salem Fred Meyer on Market Street NE for the sale. She usually arrives around 2 a.m., waiting with dozens of other shoppers in the parking lot until the doors open.

Reach reporter Jonathan Bach by email at jbach@statesmanjournal.com or by phone at 503-399-6714. Follow him on Twitter @JonathanMBach and Facebook at www.facebook.com/jonathanbachjournalist.

Silver Falls preps for a Christmas wonderland

40th annual event slated to take place on Dec. 9

JUSTIN MUCH
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While Silver Falls State Park is a year-round inviting draw, its custodians are busy preparing for one of the park's most popular days of the year.

Friends of Silver Falls State Park spokeswoman Lou Nelson said park rangers, hosts and volunteers are busy transforming the park's Historic district into a "Christmas Wonderland" for the 40th annual Christmas Festival.

The one-day festivity is from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. Saturday, Dec. 9, in the South Falls Historic District.

Nelson said musicians and choral groups are lined up as visitors can enjoy cookies, cocoa and seasonal stories in the South Falls Lodge area.

There are also a number of hands-on activities on tap, including holiday cards, gingerbread houses, festive ornaments, wreaths, nature crafts and guided hikes. The popularity is notable in the numbers.

"The festival, now in its 40th year, has always been popular; we typically receive 3,000-5,000 visitors, depending on the weather," said Silver Falls State Park Ranger Matt Palmquist.

"The most popular activities every year are wreath making and building gingerbread houses," Palmquist added. "The guided hikes are a more recent addition, but we had a great turnout last year. They are short hikes, but they highlight seasonal changes in the forest."

Most activities are free. "Give a gift to nature by building a bird nest box," Nelson urged.

The Salem Audubon Society supplies parts, tools, and expertise for that activity, which does carry a \$5 material fee for the bird nest boxes. All other crafts

and activities at the festival are free.

New this year will be activities at the Silver Falls Lodge and Conference Center.

Nelson said the center will be offering roasted chestnuts, popcorn, coffee and cocoa, and it will have holiday craft stations and carnival style games with prizes. There will also be snowflake flurries each hour, and a small selection of lunch items available for purchase in the hall.

A shuttle bus will run continuously between the conference center and the South Falls Day Use area between 11 a.m. and 4 p.m.

"The Silver Falls Lodge and Conference Center is sponsoring some activities this year both to bring more awareness to their existence — many people in

the community don't know about what they offer," Palmquist said. "(That will) help relieve overcrowding in the South Falls Day-Use Area."

Nelson reminds everyone that a day-use parking permit is required to park at Silver Falls. Visitors can purchase a one-day permit for \$5, while a one-year Oregon state parks pass is on sale Dec. 1-31 for \$25. Two-year passes are available for \$50.

Silver Falls State Park is located on Highway 214, about 16 miles southeast of Silverton. For a detailed event schedule, visit SilverFallsStatePark.wordpress.com.

For information about the Silver Falls Lodge and Conference Center, call 866-575-8875.



Silver Falls State Park South Falls Lodge is preparing for the 40th annual Christmas Festival. PHOTO COURTESY OF FRIENDS OF SILVER FALLS STATE PARK

LETTERS

Writer believes Oregon being run by dope pushers

I have just finished reading Congressman Earl Blumenauer's rant in the Silverton Appeal Tribune (Nov. 15).

Does it seem like Oregon is being run by a bunch of dope pushers or is it my imagination?

Jim Derr
Silverton






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