



A customer browses the gaming section at The Pawnshop and More in Astoria. Demand for gaming systems had risen during the pandemic, particularly for the Nintendo Switch, which sold 55 million units in March, nearly double the amount in March 2019 and by far the most since its 2017 release. As larger retailers have struggled to keep the popular console in stock many have sought second-hand games and systems at pawnshops as an alternative.

Buy, sell and pawn

Among the steady items that the shop readily buys includes laptops, jewelry, gold and coins.

“Gold, silver and guns are probably the biggest,” Dodge said.

The premise of pawning is simple.

“They come in and pawn stuff and I give them a price and they can accept or reject.”

“We can loan them on items they bring in,” Dodge said.

Each day brings something different through the door.

Pre-owned dental office equipment was among the unique items Dodge rejected in the past few days.

“I don’t know where the hell he got it, but I turned him down. I just couldn’t imagine someone wanting to buy it. I look for stuff that I think will re-sell. I’ve only got so much floor space,” he said.

Dodge, a former truck driver, is relishing the opportunity to interact with the public despite the circumstances.

“It’s a pawn store so a lot of people are down on their luck. If you’re in that financial position, the last thing you want to do is come in and ask for money,” he said. “I want to treat everybody with the respect they deserve. We’re here to help.”

The shop occasionally encounters items that are fake — usually coins and jewelry. The fake items often come from outside street sales where customers are swindled and think they purchased

something more valuable.

“I’ve seen it many times where we get people coming in selling fraudulent coins and jewelry. They come in here thinking they got a great deal but I unfortunately have to tell them, ‘No, you got screwed,’” Dodge said.

Before any gold or silver is accepted several tests are conducted to determine the authenticity and quality.

“It’s a three-step process. First thing is the

“The rack of rifles has dwindled over the past several weeks as demand continues to surge for firearms.”

magnet. Then I’ll look at it through a loupe for any stamps. But even if it’s stamped, doesn’t mean it’s real. It may be gold plated. Then I’ll do an acid test,” Dodge said.

“The acid test will tell us if it’s 10, 14, 18 karats or greater. It will also tell us if it’s real silver. The magnet is the one that will save you a lot of heartache right off the bat because if it’s fake jewelry, it’s going to grab it. Then we have to reject it,” he said.

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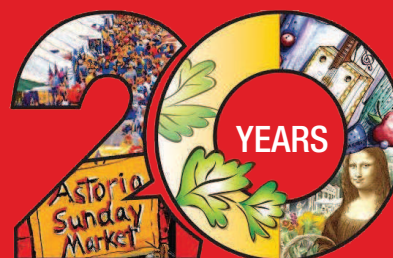
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