

Black Friday: 'It's absolutely the most important time of year for us'

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During the dead of winter, the flowers are in full bloom for one corner floral shop.

"December is generally our best month of the year," said Bloomin' Crazy Floral owner Diane Berry. "It's a significant jump over our best summer month." But it's not poinsettias that adorn store shelves during the holidays. Instead it's boutique gifts and unique flowers such as pincushion proteas, as smaller florists seek to diversify stock and get more creative to compete with big-box stores.

Down the street, another small business is gearing up for its own rendition of holiday rock.

"It's absolutely the most important time of the year for us," said Rick Holt, owner of Thiel's Music. "We rely a lot on the holiday season to get us through the slow months." Entry-level guitars are especially popular during the holidays, according to Holt, who also offers lessons on-site.

While springtime and cruise ships bring the biggest crowds, secondhand stores see a spike in business during the holidays.

"While people are out shopping for others, sometimes they want to treat themselves a little bit," said Alicia Phifer, owner of the The Fox & The Fawn, a consignment boutique at 1008 Commercial St. "And because it's secondhand, they don't feel like they're buying a big thing for themselves at a time when they need to spend money on others."



Luke Whittaker/EO Media Group

A commercial illustrator for 50 years, Dave McMacken finds inspiration in local landscapes, boat yards and abandoned buildings. Scenes depicting Astoria, Chinook and Ilwaco hang throughout his gallery, Ratz and Co., located at 260 10th Street in Astoria. Prints start at \$20.

Black Friday, Plaid Friday and Small Business Saturday

For a lot of businesses in Astoria, "Black Friday" is secondary to "Plaid Friday" and "Small Business Saturday" — alternative campaigns that aimed at encouraging shoppers to buy local and promote small businesses during the holiday season.

The big-box Black Friday experience can still be found on Commercial Street, however.

"We get crazy busy — lined up to the isle busy," said Chris Hoffman, operations supervisor at J.C. Penny in Astoria.

"Traditionally, everyone goes to Fred Meyer to get their socks because they open up an hour before we do, then they come here." Hoffman anticipates the busiest rush between 9 and 10 a.m.

"If I had to pick something that we sell a lot of that's also a good bargain for, it's sleep pants — kids, men, women — you name it," she said.



"You can save 50 percent on a refrigerator right now," said Roby's Furniture and Appliance manager Brandon Carr. "Everybody believes they can get a better deal at box stores, which isn't true." Appliances and mattresses are among the current items with the biggest discounts.

Luke Whittaker EO Media Group

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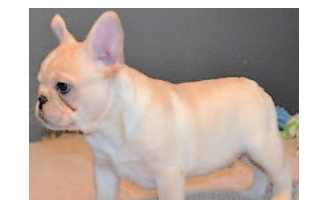
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