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Use my bag, thanks



KEVIN R. WEXLER/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Samantha Ross, 19, of Teaneck offering a reusable bag at the Whole Foods checkout counter in Paramus. Ross was there with her father, Jon Ross, and her grandmother Elaine Ross.

Bargain
hunters
better
late than
neverPost-holiday rush
keeps malls busyBy JENNIFER CUNNINGHAM
and JOAN VERDON
STAFF WRITERS

HACKENSACK – The most important holiday shopping week for North Jersey malls might fall after Christmas this year, as crowds of shoppers searched for bargains this weekend at area stores.

The final verdict on holiday sales won't arrive until Jan. 7, when many retail chains will report their results for December. And ShopperTrak, a research firm that tallies shopper traffic and retail sales, will not release its post-Christmas report until Wednesday, a spokesman said Sunday.

But in North Jersey, while after-Christmas shoppers didn't appear to be in a hurry to get to the early-morning "door-buster" sales Saturday, they emerged with a vengeance later in the day and into Sunday.

Westfield Garden State Plaza in Paramus, the largest mall in New Jersey, appeared to be having its busiest day of the season on Saturday. All of the mall's parking lots were at capacity by midday.

By 2 p.m., mall security guards had blocked off some lots and were directing cars to the overflow lots nearby.

Route 4 and Route 17 near the mall also were bumper-to-bumper late in the day. Paramus police Sgt. Sal Laferlita, who worked the early shift, said he noticed traffic increase as the day progressed.

Lisa Herrmann, marketing director for Garden State Plaza, confirmed Sunday that the mall was unusually busy on Saturday. "On a scale of one to 10, we were at 11," she said. Herrmann said the mall has been pleased with its results over the entire holiday season.

Inside the mall Saturday, most of the shoppers were carrying shopping bags, and some retailers had long lines.

Teen retailer Aeropostale, which has executive offices in Wayne, continued to be one of the apparent winners of the season.

The line there was 35 shoppers long at one point and stretched from the cash register to the store entrance. There were long lines at the Borders bookstore, the Sephora cosmetics store and the Apple store, as well.

But the longest lines at the mall were at the AMC movie theater, where every screening of "Avatar" was sold out, and hundreds of ticket holders lined up more than an hour before each screening to snag a good seat in the theater.

More gift cards used

The week between Christmas and New Year's Day, once relegated to clearance sales of Christmas cards and decorations, has become an increasingly important period for retailers.

Over the past decade, as gift cards have become more common under the Christmas tree, the week after Christmas has seen a sales boost.

On Sunday, Russ Vizzi of Glen Rock headed to Barnes & Noble in Hackensack to buy a DVD set, using the gift card his wife, Sally, bought him for Christmas.

Pam Wong of Fair Lawn was also using a gift card at the bookstore. "I'm not the mall type," she said. "It's a rare thing for me to go. But I had to spend this gift card."

The National Retail Federation is predicting sales will be down 1 percent compared to last year, while the International Council of Shopping Centers is predicting a slight increase over last year.

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Growing movement to reuse takes hold in North Jersey

By ANDREA ALEXANDER
STAFF WRITER

At grocery stores in North Jersey, the answer to the question "paper or plastic?" is more often becoming: "Neither, I brought my own bags."

After decades of emphasizing recycling, environmental advocates and climate-change experts are now shifting their focus a bit: Instead of tossing used receptacles into a recycling bin — where it takes energy to haul them away and even more to process them into new products — they're stressing it's better to use them again and again.

ENVIRONMENT

The concept is not new. Environmental advocates' mantra has always been "reduce, reuse, recycle" — but now there is a growing emphasis on reducing by reusing items more than once.

That not only means bringing reusable bags to the grocery store, but also using cloth napkins instead of paper, turning old clothes into cleaning rags, and instead of buying prepackaged deli snacks for lunch, sending children to school with a sandwich in a container that can be used over and over.

"You use 90 percent less energy to take an aluminum can and make it into a new can through recycling than if you had to mine bauxite to make aluminum and make a new can, so recycling is still important," said Jeff Tittel, director of New Jersey Sierra Club. "But reuse has become much more the environmental trend for a lot of people because you don't need to use the energy for recycling."

The Sierra Club has been encouraging its 22,000 members statewide — including nearly 3,000 in North Jersey — to reduce and reuse, in addition to recycling. Tittel said members are doing things such as bringing their own mugs to meetings at work, instead of drinking coffee out of paper cups, and giving reusable canvas bags as a holiday gift.

"One by one, what we buy, or how we buy things, will make a difference," Tittel said. "So by reusing canvas bags, it means you are not using oil and other things to make plastic bags that

are not going to spend an eternity in a landfill.

By reusing containers it saves on energy, it saves on our carbon footprint and it saves in landfills, which also cause a lot of pollution. So it's a good, simple way to lower your carbon footprint and help the environment."

Stores that encourage people to reuse can also make a difference. Tittel pointed to Whole Foods Market as a leader in encouraging reuse and said that other major chains are following their lead.

Last week, Lili Holland, of Tenafly, filled about a dozen reusable bags while shopping at the Whole Foods in Paramus. The store offers a 10-cent discount for each reusable bag shoppers bring in.

"I think we have a huge responsibility not to waste," said Holland, who also pointed out that her family tries to avoid bottled water, and her children take lunch to school in reusable containers. "I don't want to ruin the planet, and I want to protect our resources."

Other solutions are just as simple. Stop serving bottled water at catered events and public meetings, suggests Randall Solomon, executive director of the Sustainable State Institute at Rutgers University. Instead, put out pitchers of water to serve in glasses.

"You don't have to be super radical to make a huge difference," Solomon said.

'Reduce and reuse'

One of the recommendations in a greenhouse-gas report released last week by the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection also emphasizes the need to reduce and reuse — not only recycle.

"The more scientific information that we get, we are realizing the importance of reduce and reuse along with recycling," said DEP spokeswoman Elaine Makatura.

Stephen Roe, director of the Climate Change Services Group for the Virginia-based consulting firm E.H. Pechar, which has done work for the DEP, says environmental experts are lately taking into account the energy used to produce, package and transport an item, before it's used and discarded, to determine an area's carbon emissions.

"When we talk about greenhouse-gas emissions, if we start thinking about things on a consumption basis, we can affect the emissions in China somewhere by what we consume here in the United States," said Roe, who also is producing a greenhouse-gas inventory for the North Jersey Transportation Planning Authority. The report will be a "first of its kind," Roe said, because it will take into account the greenhouse-gas emissions associated with what residents buy.

"Now there is a recognition that consumption patterns are a strong determinant of global emissions, and changing consumption can have a tremendous impact on reducing emissions," Roe said.

1,500 mugs given out

Reuse is a concept Clifton's recycling coordinator, Alfred DuBois, promotes and lives by.

He uses a handkerchief instead of tissues, his family refills a glass jug at the municipal well (instead of buying water in plastic bottles that get tossed out after one use) and they compost food waste and use the nutrient-rich soil in their garden.

He said the city has given out 1,500 reusable mugs in the last two years to encourage people to reuse and refill instead of going through disposable cups.

DuBois also said he believes that people should buy in bulk to reduce packaging and suggests bringing prescription bottles back to the pharmacy for refills.

He'd also like to see grocery stores sell laundry detergent in bulk so people could use the same bottle a few hundred times before tossing it out with the recycling.

"To bring that bottle to the recycling center, or have it collected at the curb, then crushed, then brought to another facility, separated, then baled, then shipped to another facility, broken apart one more time then melted down — recycling takes a lot of energy," DuBois said.

"And that is only a one-time use, but if you use it 200 times and then finally recycle it, you've saved all that energy."

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Reducing
through
reusing

Recycling is essential to preserving the environment, but advocates are starting to say it's even better to reduce what we use and reuse what we have.

Here are some easy ways to reduce and reuse:

- Bottled water consumes a lot of resources to make and transport the product. It takes 17 million barrels of oil to manufacture, and about another 10 million to 11 million barrels to transport, the amount of bottled water Americans drink in one year, according to research from the California-based Pacific Institute. Instead, drink tap water and put out pitchers of water to serve in glasses, instead of offering plastic bottles of water at public meetings and catered events.

- Avoid buying individually wrapped cheese slices. Buy cheese sliced from the deli or cut off pieces from a block.

- When possible, buy in bulk to reduce packaging.

- Use reusable cloth napkins instead of paper.

- Use glasses instead of disposable paper cups.

- Bring lunch to work and school in reusable containers.

Sources: U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and various environmental advocates

Train hits SUV, killing Passaic man

By KAREN ROUSE
STAFF WRITER

CLIFTON – A Passaic man was killed Sunday morning when his SUV was struck by an NJ Transit train.

The vehicle James Brown, 34, was driving had gotten stuck on the tracks, police said.

Vehicle was stuck on tracks after going out of control

The accident occurred at 5:21 a.m. near Park Avenue and Rutherford Boulevard in Clifton, less than a mile from Brown's home, said **CLIFTON** Jeep, Stessel said.

Brown's vehicle apparently had gone out of control before it got stuck, Dan Stessel, a transit agency spokesman, said. "The vehicle left the roadway

and went through some trees and landed on the tracks," he said.

Brown was alone in the vehicle. None of the train crew was injured.

Stessel said there is no indication the crew did anything wrong. The Main Line continued to operate on a parallel track Sunday.