

Valentine's Day blues

Local business owners unsure of holiday sales

By MICHELLE LESTER
Collegian Staff Writer

The recession does not discriminate. It even creeps into the pockets of lovers.

Local flower and candy businesses expect increased Valentine's Day sales but some jewelry store owners have not sold as much as they have in the past. Florists differ on how much they predict customers will spend on their valentines.

"Love has no limits," said Susan Traxler, owner of Belle Garden Florals, 116 S. Spring St. "You can't put a price on love. People won't care how much they spend on flowers, as long as they look nice."

Stephanie Woodring, manager of Woodring's Floral Gardens, 145 S. Allen St., said although people will still buy Valentine's Day gifts, they might not spend as much on them.

"We know that more people have \$3, \$4 or \$5 in their pockets than people who have \$30, \$40 or \$50," Woodring said. But people can always afford some kind of flower, from a small spring bouquet to long-stemmed roses, she said.

Woodring added that her flower sales increased about 2 percent last Valentine's Day, but would not predict this holiday's sales. She has received a few more orders, but said that people usually order flowers at the last minute on Valentine's Day.

Jewelry store owners and managers are concerned about a drop in holiday sales.

"The big sales just aren't there," said Michael Bay, manager of Crabtrees Jewelers Inc., 132 S. Allen St. "The candy and flower businesses have pretty much taken over the Valentine's Day trade."

But Bay did not attribute the lack of sales to the recession, saying he thinks the State College area is insulated from the national economy.

"It's not really a big holiday. It's not important

enough to spend more money on jewelry — a big ticket item," Bay said.

Sarah Songer, owner of The Candy Cane, 128 W. College Ave., said that during the Christmas season more people spent money on less expensive gifts such as candy. She expects the same for Valentine's Day.

"Instead of expensive jewelry, people may go to the more traditional kinds of things like valentine's hearts," Songer said, adding that she expects business to pick up toward the end of the week.

Don Goldberg, owner of Steven's Jewelers, 218 S. Allen St., said the economy has affected his Valentine's Day sales.

"Usually this time of the year we have increased sales, but not this year," Goldberg said, adding that he has not sold as many of his biggest-selling Valentine's Day item — engagement rings.

But Jim Eberly, support manager for Moyer Jewelers, 100 E. College Ave., said his Valentine's Day sales have been consistent over the past few years, including this year.

"We're doing OK," Eberly said. "Valentine's Day is not like Christmas, when people go out and start buying things at Thanksgiving. Business is pretty normal now, but it will probably pick up this week."

"Because of the recession, people are more conservative in spending," said Marvella Crabb, spokeswoman for the Society of American Florists in Alexandria, Va.

Prices for flowers — especially roses — will increase because of the holiday demand, Crabb predicted.

"It's the coldest and the most expensive time of the year to raise flowers," she said.

Demands on the industry for the holiday, such as increased orders, overtime payment for flower store employees and extra packaging also cause flower prices to increase, Crabb said.

Expert: Crime activity differs between sexes

By LISA HUMPHREY
Collegian Staff Writer

Women are less likely to commit violent crimes and usually commit crimes for others, not for personal benefit, according to a University crime expert.

Darrell Steffensmeier — Penn State professor of sociology and one of the country's leading authorities on crime — said women are less likely to commit crimes than men because of differences in moral development, social control, physical strength and crime opportunities.

"Femininity and the role of a female define the lives of women and their involvement in crime in a powerful kind of way," Steffensmeier said.

Marriage and parenthood are major life goals that are crucial in the socialization of females rather than males, and crime is incompatible with these roles, he said.

Lynne Goodstein, associate professor of administration of justice and women's studies, agreed that men and women are socialized into different cultures that expect certain forms of behavior.

"There are certain ways men and women are expected to act," she said. "Women focus on the welfare of others and tend to consider the needs of everyone."

Being feminine is also not associated with crime. But being criminal is very compatible with what it means to be masculine, Steffensmeier said.

Lack of aggressiveness and risk-taking limit a woman's ability to become involved in crime, he said. They may take risks in relationships, but not in exploiting the physical

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— Darrell Steffensmeier
professor of sociology

environment, he added.

"Women need a higher level of provocation, and they must traverse a greater psychological distance to commit a crime," he said.

Women are taught to be less violent and less risky, he added.

For crimes like public drunkenness, larceny and minor criminal mischief, the motives and number of each gender committing those crimes is the same, Steffensmeier added.

University Police Services Officer Chris Cihak said she deals with the same number of female and male offenders at the University, but the forms of crime differ.

"Men steal just as much as women, but the women are most likely to steal from other women in the dormitories," she said.

Women offenders at the University also use stolen checks or credit cards where the men are more likely to harass or make prank phone calls, Cihak said.

"In this area, most definitely the men are more violent in crimes," she said.

A large proportion of women who commit crimes are addicted to alcohol or drugs and often have children who rely on them for economic support, Goodstein said.

"Most of these women are sub-

jects of victimization, like neglect or abuse," she said.

Organized forms of crime, like large-scale corporate crime, also tend to be overwhelmingly male-dominated, Steffensmeier said.

"This is one of the most glaring differences in crime," he added. "The constraints of women and fewer opportunities they have to commit crimes takes a greater push by women to be involved with crime."

When women want to break into male-dominated crime groups, they're frequently defined in terms of sex roles by playing a secondary role or acting as a sexual decoy, Steffensmeier said, adding that prostitution is the only female-dominated crime.

"Female crime is dominated by their involvement in sex-related crimes," he said. "Women can market sex in a way that men cannot."

Men and women tend to gravitate toward the crime that best fits their skills and provides the most money for the least amount of work, he added.

Shoplifting, minor larceny, employee theft and bad checks are among the most common female crimes, because women are more likely to shop and write checks, Steffensmeier said.

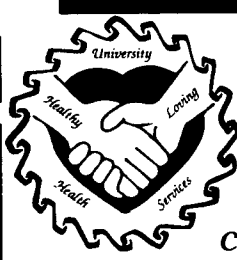
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