

It's Christmastime!

During the Holidays, We All Feel Better at The Gallery at South DeKalb



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Stretched but Not Stressed

By Hakim Braxton

“Necessity is the mother of invention” is more than a saying for merchants at The Gallery at South DeKalb. Current tough economic times have required many business owners to be extremely creative to keep customers coming through their doors and their businesses solvent.



Sekou Rideaux

Sekou Rideaux, general manager at Piccadilly at the mall, said his company created a \$4.99 lunch special that has created quite a bit of buzz. Two different menu items at the discount price are offered each day.

“Folks look forward to it,” said Rideaux of the promotion that began two months ago.

He said Piccadilly reacted to the declining economy proactively and has kept customers interested and reacting favorably.

And Rideaux also sees this challenging time as an opportunity to put additional emphasis on one of the company’s tenets: customer service. He said employees are receiving additional training in various aspects of customer service such as greeting guests and making sure that they have a favorable experience and are likely to return.

Rideaux, who has been with Piccadilly for 10½ years, is optimistic about the future. “I think we will continue to do well,” he said, noting that the restaurant at the Gallery at South DeKalb has been around for 35 years and is number one in sales volume in Atlanta.

Over at Impressive Designs, a personalized T-shirt and novelties operation at the mall, Dwayne Smith is using bundling as an incentive to attract customers, and he said it’s working.

Buy a T-shirt and get a button for free or for one discount price get a personalized mouse pad, button and T-shirt. Smith said that previously bundling was only available for bulk order customers.

Smith also adjusts pricing based on the flow of business — reducing the \$15.99 price of T-shirts to \$9.99 on slow days. “I take it one day at a time,” he notes. “I know I am going to stay open.”



Dwayne Smith

Fam Merchant, owner of Diamond Treasures, a jewelry store in the mall, resorted to a marketing strategy from the past. Last year during the holiday season, he offered a free gift to customers who spent \$400 at any store in the mall. With a receipt as proof, those customers were given his-and-hers watch sets free.



Fam Merchant at right with customer

Merchant said the giveaway brought people into his store who had money to spend and who then became acquainted with his merchandise. Many became paying customers.

The promotion that resulted in 200 watch sets given away last year is back, and Merchant expects to hand over the same amount this year.

But Merchant said the giveaway isn’t the only reason he thinks consumers may soon be willing to spend a little more. He points to falling gas prices and gold prices as two other factors that could help his business.



Janice Lowe (in red on right) and staff

“I feel it will be better now,” said Merchant, who has operated from the mall for five years.

Janice Lowe, owner of Glamorous Hair, agrees that fluctuations in prices for such things as gas have a ripple effect on small businesses.

“They had to put gas in their cars instead of washing their hair,” explained Lowe. But when clients started coming in less frequently and some not at all, Lowe and her stylist agreed to slash their prices by 50 percent. That measure captured the attention of some old and many new customers who returned to the salon for a service and thanked them for the price break.

“We just have to help each other,” said Lowe, who has called The Gallery at South DeKalb home for 10 years. She added that the mall’s management has been particularly supportive, working with tenants, and she has taken advantage of marquee advertising outside the mall on Candler Road.

Working collectively is key to surviving in the current economy, she said. “We gain strength by banding together and encouraging one another,” said Lowe.

New Santa Delights in Warming Hearts

By Animigio Byrd

Had it not been for the constant ringing of an insurance instructor's cell phone, playing "Santa Claus is Coming to Town," Dion Sinclair might today be selling insurance. Instead he finds himself with what he describes as the best job of earth — playing Santa Dee at The Gallery at South DeKalb.

Daily through the holiday season, Santa Dee brings joy, laughter and a patient ear to children who are mostly eager (though some are shy or scared) to share their hearts' desires with the jolly old man.

Sinclair recalls that initially he was fascinated by the frequency of the instructor's ringing phone and when he learned that he worked as a Santa who earned \$28,000 for a few weeks' work, and the calls were people trying to book him for special events, Sinclair began to stroke his naturally graying goatee with interest. Then the instructor shared that African-American Santas were in demand but also in short supply. It wasn't long before Sinclair was growing his goatee into a full beard and enrolling in Santa school.

"I have my doctorate and masters in santa-ology," he quips.

Now he's delighting young and old with the conventional picture taking and lap time so that children can whisper what's on their wish lists.

Sinclair said that his most rewarding experiences are when he can coax a timid or scared child to come to him, and that child leaves smiling. And he explains his philosophy that the "man in the red suit" is about "giving and character in what he does."

This year the young ones sitting on his lap aren't expressing worries about the economy, however; several have mentioned that mom or dad is serving in Iraq or Afghanistan in the military and that they want them to come home. He tells them that Santa will see what he can do. "You can't promise anything," he added.

Santa Dee — like The Gallery at South DeKalb's mall management — likes to do things in style exuding excitement. So Santa arrived at The Gallery at South DeKalb in mid-November, ushered in



by the McNair "Mustangs" high school marching band, a dance team, drill team, cheerleaders, singers and costumed characters, in a celebratory parade with the "man in the red suit" chauffeured in a c-Lexus, courtesy of Ragazza Motorsports. The mall has a long-standing tradition of having an African-American naturally bearded Santa in residence

throughout the holiday season. Sinclair is in his first full season in the role.

Though Santa is more than 100 years old, Sinclair acknowledges that he's 44 and is enamored with playing Santa Claus. And he's made it a family affair — rallying his mother to serve as Mrs. Claus, his brother-in-law as the set manager, his wife as the Internet technology specialist and nephews as elves.

In the off-season, Sinclair, who lives in Conyers, and his clan run a landscape business called Done Right.

And when asked what "Santa" wants for Christmas, Sinclair has a wish of his own that he's hoping will come true: to eventually retire and play Santa exclusively.

GET ON SANTA'S SCHEDULE!

Make a Holiday Memory!
Have your child's photo taken with Santa.

Santa's Hours:
Monday-Saturday: 11am - 8pm
Sundays: 1:30pm - 5:30pm
Christmas Eve: 10am - 6pm

Note - Friday, Dec. 5: Set closes at 7pm

Breakfast with Santa!
Enjoy a Holiday Breakfast with Santa!

Saturday, Dec. 6
8am - 10am
Piccadilly Cafeteria

The first 150 children (10 and under) will be admitted free of charge.

Did you know this about the holidays?

From the Old English 'Cristes Mæsse' (meaning the 'mass of Christ') the story of Christmas begins with the birth of a babe in Bethlehem.

It is believed that Christ was born on the 25th, although the exact month is unknown. December was likely chosen so the Catholic Church could compete with rival pagan rituals held at that time of year and because of its closeness with the winter solstice in the northern hemisphere, a traditional of celebration among many ancient cultures.

Santa Claus

The origin of Santa Claus begins in the 4th century with Saint Nicholas, Bishop of Myra, an area in present day Turkey. By all accounts, St. Nicholas was a generous man, devoted to children.

His kindness and reputation for generosity gave rise to claims he could perform miracles, and devotion to him increased. In time, St. Nicholas became the patron saint of Russia, where he was known by his red cape, flowing white beard and bishop's mitre.

In Greece, he is the patron saint of sailors, in France the patron of lawyers and in Belgium the patron of children and travellers. Thousands of churches across Europe were dedicated to him, and some time around the 12th century an official church holiday was created in his honor. The Feast of St. Nicholas was celebrated December 6 and the day was marked by gift-giving and charity.

After the Reformation, European followers of St. Nicholas dwindled, but the legend was kept alive in Holland where the Dutch spelling of his name, Sint Nikolaas, was eventually transformed to Sinterklaas. Dutch children would leave their wooden shoes by the fireplace, and Sinterklaas would reward good children by placing treats in their shoes. Dutch colonists brought this tradition to America in the 17th century, and here the Anglican name of Santa Claus emerged.

In 1822 Clement C. Moore composed the poem "A Visit From Saint Nicholas," published as "The Night Before Christmas" as a gift for his children:

*He had a broad face and a little round belly,
That shook when he laughed, like a bowl full of jelly,
He was chubby and plump, a right jolly old elf,
And I laughed when I saw him, in spite of myself;
A wink of his eye and a twist of his head
Soon gave me to know I had nothing to dread.*

Christmas Trees

In 16th-century Germany fir trees were decorated, both indoors and out, with apples, roses, gilded candies and colored paper. In the Middle Ages, a popular religious play depicted the story of Adam and Eve's expulsion from the Garden of Eden. A fir tree hung with apples was used to symbolize the Garden of Eden — the Paradise Tree.

It is held that Protestant reformer Martin Luther first adorned trees with light. While coming home one December evening, the beauty of the stars shining through the branches of a fir inspired him to recreate the effect by placing candles on the branches of a small fir tree inside his home

more on page 5

Entertainment Gem Offers Movies, Dining and Jazz

By Jalen Gallemore

Galaxy Theaters 12 and Jazz Lounge is a gem of an entertainment venue that South DeKalb-ites have come to love, and metro-Atlanta residents are beginning to find out about and appreciate.

Those unfamiliar with the many facets of the complex, located on the back side of The Gallery at South DeKalb, may think of it as merely a movie theater; that would be extremely off the mark. Yes, it has 12 stadium-seating theaters in which first-run movies can be enjoyed, but it also features in-theater dining and not just popcorn, candy and soda but such menu items as Philly cheese steak sandwiches, hot wings, quesadillas and chicken wraps, just to name a few of the enhanced menu items. The theater auditoriums are specially

designed so that moviegoers have room for a meal. But the hidden treasure of this building is the jazz lounge, fully independent of the theater, which offers a full bar and serves food in a restaurant-style atmosphere. Brent Thompson, district manager of Phoenix Adlabs Theater Management Company, said "the theater and jazz lounge compliment each other so well that it simply presents added options of a little something extra to do and together helps our guests unwind."

"We are one of a few theaters in the country that allow meals and alcoholic beverages in the theater auditoriums," stated Thompson. This element alone adds to the uniqueness of the Galaxy concept at The Gallery at South DeKalb.



Some folks out to enjoy an afternoon or evening stop by the Jazz Bar, located just inside the doors, for libations, food and nightly live entertainment. Thompson added that the offerings of entertainment have expanded recently with management hosting karaoke on Tuesday and Thursday nights, spoken word on Wednesday nights, live jazz (featuring Herman Mitchell & The All Stars) on Friday and Saturday nights and "game night" featured on Sunday and Monday, for those wanting to watch NFL and even play a thought-provoking game of chess.

The theater opened with much fanfare in April 2007 with red carpet arrival of celebrities and local dignitaries. The jazz bar, which opened late August this year, is the newest addition to the 42,000-square-foot complex.

Apparently the Galaxy FunPlex has created buzz on the Web. Reviewers at one movie theater website commented favorably about the theater's food, design and overall atmosphere. "Once guests find out where we are they say they won't go anywhere else," stated Thompson.

For more information on theater movie listings, please call (404) 243-3605 and (404) 243-3606 for additional inquiries.

Required Reading

By Khadijah Lomax

Tressa Smallwood is a novelist, publisher, consultant and the mother of two. Oh, and she also operates the Talk About Books cart at The Gallery at South DeKalb.

"I wear many, many hats," said Smallwood in a recent telephone interview from her home in the Washington, D.C. area.



Tressa Smallwood

was told about The Gallery at South DeKalb and stopped by for a visit. She liked what she saw and last April Talk About Books opened for business.

Smallwood doesn't buy the notion held by some that African Americans don't read. She said the average title produced by her company sells between 10,000 and 20,000 copies.

"That means that African-Americans do read," she points out.

The former teacher penned her first book in 2003 while pregnant with her first daughter and restricted to bed rest. A family member who worked in a correctional facility shared experiences about what took place behind bars. Inspired by those tales, Smallwood spun her own story called *A Life to Remember* about a young man betrayed by a friend who's imprisoned in a correctional facility. Her first self-publishing effort was such a success that she ordered an immediate additional printing and went on to write three other books under the pen name Azarel. Smallwood explained that she chose a pseudonym given that she was a teacher and some of the material in her novel was a bit racy.

Smallwood has built a company, Life Changing Books, that she describes as one of only four African-American owned enterprises considered a traditional publisher with the clout to get its authors into major bookstores and retail outlets.

Not only does she publish her own books, she also publishes those of 14 other authors. The company has produced 32 books since 2003.

Smallwood said she decided to open a book cart at The Gallery at South DeKalb after noticing that the number of independent bookstores in metro-Atlanta that carried her works was dwindling. While in the area for a book signing, Smallwood

And the brisk business that her enterprise transacts in the mall is also evidence to counter that notion, she said.

Even during the current economic downturn, Smallwood said people are still buying books. To ensure that sales remain strong throughout the holidays, Smallwood is offering a buy one, get one free offer at Talk About Books.

Looking to 2009, Smallwood is continuing to forge new ground. She doesn't want to reveal too much about two pending nonfiction book deals that feature "national figures" she expects will take her company to "the next level." There are also two screenplays being developed from her company's books that are expected to go into production next year.

Asked how she balances her many endeavors and a busy family, she said, "I have a very, very supportive husband and family."



Tree of Love Spreads Spirit of Holiday Season

By *Monica Hawkins*

Facing the Christmas season without the ability to provide one's children with holiday surprises can be heartbreaking. Unfortunately many parents face such a reality.

However, for more than nine years, the Tree of Love has helped to brighten the holiday season for a number of metro-Atlanta families, and it's reaching out to families again this year. Through Tree of Love, families with foster care children and single parents with low incomes are eligible to receive gifts for their children.

Tanisha Gourdine of Decatur recalls that last Christmas looked pretty grim before she was notified that she and her family would benefit from the program. Unemployed and the single parent of three children, Gourdine anticipated it would not be a merry Christmas. She was wrong. Her two sons, ages 12 and 13, and 6-year-old daughter received gift cards, toys and clothes.

"It was a great big help," said Gourdine. "I wasn't working at the time and didn't have much money to get them the things they were asking for. It helped me out a lot."

In fact, she said her daughter received just about everything on her wish list: Barbie and Bratz dolls, a tea set and doll clothes.

The Tree of Love is a Christmas tree decorated with the names of children identified from the Department of Family and Children Services and other groups. Shoppers at the Wal-Mart at 3580 Memorial Drive in Decatur are asked to take a name and purchase a gift for that child by Dec. 17. Gifts are distributed to the children at a Christmas program held at The Gallery at South DeKalb on Dec. 20.

Last year, more than 450 children were served through the program.

DeKalb Commissioner Larry Johnson, who has been involved in the program for several years, said the Tree of Love needs continued support. "This Christmas is going to be especially hard for a lot of children this year," said Johnson.

To adopt a Tree of Love child, call 404-371-2988, or email larryjohnson@co.dekalb.ga.us.

DON'T MISS OUR FAMILY EVENTS FOR THE HOLIDAYS

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 3

6:00pm - 6:30pm  McNair Middle School Band

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 5

6:00pm - 6:30pm  Clifton Cougar Chorus

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 6

5:00pm - 5:30pm  All 4 You Training & Performing Arts Center

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 7

4:00pm - 4:30pm  Princess Pearls & Queen Pearls Drill Team

5:00pm - 5:30pm  A Gift of Dance Studio

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 9

6:00pm - 6:30pm  Elevated Places Dance Company
7:00pm - 7:30pm  Decatur Adventist Junior Academy

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 10

6:00pm - 6:30pm  Carters Daycare I
7:00pm - 7:30pm  Carters Daycare II




FRIDAY, DECEMBER 12

6:00pm - 7:00pm 

Giwayen Mata Dance Troop

7:00pm - 7:30pm  E.L. Miller Elementary School


SATURDAY, DECEMBER 13

5:00pm - 5:30pm  Dance Creation
6:00pm - 6:30pm  Kelly Lake Dancing Lioness
7:00pm - 7:30pm  The Way, Truth & Life Christian Center

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 14

4:00pm - 4:30pm  Holy Praise Children's Choir
5:00pm - 5:30pm  Gospel of Faith Worship Center

MONDAY, DECEMBER 15

6:00pm - 6:30pm  Ronald McNair High School Master Singers

7:00pm - 7:30pm  Greenforest Children's Choir

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 16

7:00pm - 7:30pm  Virella's Dance & Performing Arts

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 17

7:00pm - 7:30pm  Chapel Hill Middle School Dance Troup

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 18

6:00pm - 7:00pm  Family Fun Night

"Merry Christmas with Puppet Friends"

This puppet show features loveable puppets that will have young and old feeling the Christmas spirit. (Macy's Stage)

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 19

6:00pm - 6:30pm  Chapel Hill Middle School Orchestra

7:00pm - 7:30pm  Rhonda's Inn Home Day Care

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 20

5:00pm - 5:30pm  SM-LAC Alumane Chapter, Delta Sigma Theta Sorority Step Team

6:00pm - 6:30pm  Love, Life Christian Fellowship

7:00pm - 7:30pm  Iris Academy of Music Movement

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 21

4:00pm - 4:30pm  Youth Missionary Group

5:00pm - 5:30pm  The Chosen Aggregation

MONDAY, DECEMBER 22

7:00pm - 8:00pm  Ken Ford in Concert

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 23

7:00pm - 7:30pm  Cambridge Academy

cont'd from page 3

Did you know this about the holidays?

The Johnkankus — an African-American Christmas tradition

The Johnkankus is one of the first African-American traditions lasting in various locations for 276 years. (The celebration of the Jonkankus died out among African-Americans around 1865 because of its association with slavery.)

The most popular musical event for the southeastern slave community was the celebration of the Johnkankus, a celebration in honor of an ancient African chief. In celebrating the Johnkankus, the community was continuing an African folkway and also creating one of the first African-American traditions. American abolitionist and writer Harriet Jacobs noted "Every child rises early on Christmas morning to see the Johnkankus."

The Johnkankus apparently originated along the West Coast of Africa and was spread to the West Indies and the southern coast of America with the African Diaspora. Edward Long the author of "History of Jamaica" (London, 1774) wrote: "This dance is probably an honorable memorial of John Conny, a celebrated cabocero at Tres Puntas, in Axim, on the Guiney coast; who flourished about the year 1720." Tres Puntas at Axim was a small town and today the Ghanaian coastal town of Axim.

The festival was distinctive for its unusual costumes, all made out of rags and tatters, found objects and recycled materials. The Jonkonnu members wore masks that were wildly original made from whatever odds and ends the slaves could find. January Conny, a powerful Gold Coast merchant, was also known for inventing songs and original chants for the holiday, sung loudly and rhythmically, performed to the beat of the drums called gumba boxes made from animal skins pulled over a frame.

The leader of the parade, or Johnkankus himself, was usually male, but in Jamaica as early as 1769 there were male and female 'Connus.' In America, toward the end of the celebration around 1865 in North Carolina, there was an occasional Jonkonnu female. In a painting by Winslow Homer called "Dressing for the Carnival" the Johnkankus is male while those helping him get dressed for the celebration are female. The John Connu songs were always very inventive, funny and sometimes ended with a sting, thereby creating some of the earliest protest songs.

Jamaica, where it is still celebrated, is where the Jonkonnu has had the longest continuous celebration.

(Source: Irene Smalls)

Christmas Stockings

According to legend, a kindly nobleman grew despondent over the death of his beloved wife and foolishly squandered his fortune. This left his three young daughters without dowries, thus facing a life of spinsterhood.

The generous St. Nicholas, hearing of the girls' plight, set forth to help. Wishing to remain anonymous, he rode his white horse by the nobleman's house and threw three small pouches of gold coins down the chimney, where they were fortuitously captured by the stockings the young women had hung by the fireplace to dry.

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WHAT THEY WANT

for Christmas

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Meeow!

Who's afraid of heights? Santa's leaving this red boot under the tree for a special Mrs. Claus.

(\$99.99, Bakers) ▶

WHAT THEY WANT

For Christmas



Sparkle & Sizzle

Holiday party invites are waiting in your mailbox! Compliment your radiant personality with a shimmering dress so you can light up the room.

Gold Crotchet Holiday Dress \$69
Gold Knit Cascade Ruffle Dress \$49
(Ashley Stewart)



All Buttoned Up?

Be fashionable and warm in this classic red coat with a modern edge.

Rouge Double-Breasted Funnel Neck Collar Trench
\$295 (Macy's)

Stocking Stuffers

Soundshop has stocking stuffers for everyone in the house. Have you heard the new Beyonce double CD?



Accessories to the Crime

The perfect finishing touches to an outfit are all found at Bakers. These "accessories to the crime" of looking fabulous are affordable and awesome. Fringe is in, clutches are hot, big bags are booming, get ready to rock!

Fringe boots \$49.99 Clutch \$39.95 Big Faux Croc Bag \$55.95
Fringe scarf \$14.99 Red Boots \$99.99



Smart Stylin'

The perennial favorite is back, and this ensemble is PERFECT for the man who wants to make a statement.

Houndstooth Tuxedo style suit \$149.95
(Harold Pener)



Apart from the Pack

Let Jimmy Jazz help you set him apart from the rest of the pack in this track jacket by COOGI. It's subtle and speaks volumes about his sense of style.

\$199 (Jimmy Jazz)



Great Buy

Leather crop jackets are the talk of the town. This purple jacket from UNICA is darling and won't break the bank.

\$52.00 (UNICA)



Royal Stud

Help your king claim his rightful position with I AM KING cologne by Sean John.

\$72.00 3.4oz (exclusively at Macy's)

Well Deserved Attention

Hold on to him tight on date night. This PRONTI leather appliqué sweater and MEK vintage "mudsilk" jeans will definitely get him some "well deserved" attention.

Sweater \$68.00
Jeans \$212.00
(PRONTI)

Easy Texting

Tired of texting without a full keyboard? Get the latest technology from AT&T with Blackberry Bold.

\$549.99 (AT&T)



Can't get the real one?

Why not surprise your loved one with this Mercedes Benz SLR - McLaren remote control car ... goes 1,000 feet per minute. Officially licensed by Mercedes Benz.

\$49.99 (Radio Shack)



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Young Professionals Making All the Right Moves

By Tené M. Harris

There is no shortage of dynamic, intelligent, highly motivated and successful business people at The Gallery at South DeKalb. And among those who are making positive moves are a good number of young people who have made major accomplishments thus far in their careers and are individuals who are definitely worth watching.



Sheree Holbert

Sheree Holbert, 26, has been the store manager at Bakers for about a year and a half. Before that this self-described “shoe girl” owned her own embroidery business in partnership with her mother at another mall. Although that involved working a 90-hour week, she said she “loved it.”

However now she says that the company she works for is one of the best around and that her standard is to put a smile on the faces of people who walk into her store.

In her role as a manager, Holbert said she tries to give the young women she hires advice and direction. Among the topics she’ll talk to them about: education, interviewing and advancing one’s career.

“I tell them it’s very possible to do what you set your mind on,” said Holbert, who also shares her most personal philosophies with the young women. “I believe in marriage before kids. These girls just need someone to talk to and a little guidance.”

Moving into management hasn’t been problem free. Holbert said that in the beginning she faced quite a few challenges due in part to her age and the fact that she also looks young.

“People first took to challenging my authority. You have to learn how to articulate yourself, stand up, mean what you say,” she said.

Holbert, who is currently attending cosmetology school in addition to her full time manager job, doesn’t believe in being complacent. In five years, she hopes to be a cosmetologist in an upscale salon.

Bernardo Hicks and partner Tim Maxman founded Hi-Fli Tones in 2005. The company offers independent hip hop ringtones and mobile content. Before getting a mall location, Hicks offered his services and content at flea markets, then moved on to three other malls and retail locations.



Bernardo Hicks

The 27-year-old said he focuses on the job to overcome any doubts about his age and his abilities. That has worked itself out “over time with experience and learning.” He also added that realizing that he could turn an idea in his head into cash was a huge confidence builder. “Running from poverty keeps me driven,” he said.

Hicks said he attempts to inspire others by leading by example: “Being the best I can be.” And one of the most important individuals he tries to get that message across to is his 10-year-old son. “I bring him to work with me to teach him, get him into my world. Teach him about money,” Hicks said.

In the future he would like to be in a position to work any place he chooses in the world using the Internet, he explained.

Monica Hawkins is the marketing assistant at The Gallery at South DeKalb and responsible for coordinating all events staged at the mall. She also works in the areas of tenant relations, advertising and promotion. She has been in the position for slightly more than a year.



Monica Hawkins

That’s no small task, especially considering that there are more than 300 events taking place at The Gallery at South DeKalb in a year. And Hawkins said the goal for each is basically the same — generating traffic and making each event a success through merchant and community participation.

Her demanding job requires a tremendous amount of flexibility on her part, as it often requires working late into the evening and on weekends. The single mother credits support from family and girlfriends for helping to keep her 12-year-old son involved in extracurricular activities and on top of his school work.

Hawkins has taken something of a roundabout route to her current job. Several years ago she was a copywriter for USA Today Online and worked for nearly eight years at the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, moving up through the ranks in advertising, marketing and sales.

One of the areas that she has had to work on is making it clear to those she encounters that her “soft disposition” doesn’t mean she’s a pushover. “I make certain that they see how I operate,” she said.

While she’s not always able to give people the “yes” or “go-ahead” they are seeking, she said she almost always offers suggestions or ways in which they could tweak their event or activity. “If I can’t accommodate, I’m always willing to share ideas of other things you can consider. I hate to turn anyone away,” Hawkins said.

And she’s learned along the way that dealing with the challenges of being in position of authority gets easier over time.

Hawkins, 37, has a clear vision of where she would like to see herself in five years — as general manager of a mall.

Antasha Royal is one of the managers at the Chick-fil-A store in The Gallery at South DeKalb and a veteran employee with eight years experience under her belt. And Royal is only 22.



Antasha Royal

The fact that Chick-Fil-A runs in the family blood is only part of the reason why Royal believes strongly in establishing a name for herself within the business. She began working at the fast food chain as a cashier at 14. She fell in love with the company culture of “striving for excellence, great customer service and demonstrating leadership.” It wasn’t long before Royal was noticed and given the responsibility to train all new cashiers. She was tapped to take on duties as a manager when she was about 17. She admits to being nervous and scared.

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Did you know this about the holidays?

Mistletoe

Mistletoe was used by Druid priests 200 years before the birth of Christ in their winter celebrations. They revered the plant since it had no roots yet remained green during the cold months of winter.

The ancient Celts believed mistletoe to have magical healing powers and used it as an antidote for poison, infertility and to ward off evil spirits. The plant was also seen as a symbol of peace, and it is said that among Romans enemies who met under mistletoe would lay down their weapons and embrace.

Scandinavians associated the plant with Frigga, their goddess of love, and it may be from this that we derive the custom of kissing under the mistletoe.

Holly, Ivy and Greenery

In Northern Europe, Christmas occurred during the middle of winter, when ghosts and demons could be heard howling in the winter winds. Boughs of holly, believed to have magical powers since they remained green through the harsh winter, were often placed over the doors of homes to drive evil away. Greenery was also brought indoors to freshen the air and brighten the mood during the long, dreary winter.

Legend also has it that holly sprang from the footsteps of Christ as he walked the earth. The pointed leaves were said to represent the crown of thorns Christ wore while on the cross, and the red berries symbolized the blood he shed.

Poinsettias

A native Mexican plant, poinsettias were named after Joel R. Poinsett, U.S. ambassador to Mexico who brought the plant to America in 1828. Poinsettias were likely used by Mexican Franciscans in their 17th century Christmas celebrations. One legend has it that a young Mexican boy, on his way to visit the village Nativity scene, realized he had no gift for the Christ child. He gathered pretty green branches from along the road and brought them to the church. Though the other children mocked him, when the leaves were laid at the manger, a beautiful star-shaped flower appeared on each branch.

The Nativity Scene

Though the evidence of a pastoral setting for Jesus’ birth is not clear, it was assumed so by some as early as A.D. 343, the earliest recorded manger scene. There were Medieval manger scenes in caves, houses and churches, and occasionally in stables or with shepherds. The ox and ass legend shows up no earlier than the 3rd century and was added in art representation by 1498, based on non-gospel Biblical accounts: “The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master’s crib” (Isaiah 1.3).

St. Francis of Assisi, in Greccio, Italy, 1223, initiated the tradition of the more elaborate nativity pageant with animals in a grotto. In Luke, shepherds do visit the scene. The idea of camels may come from “crossing the desert” from “the east,” but the gifts are materials suggesting southern Arabian origin. Though three Magi are shown in nativity scenes it is not known how many there were suppose to be.

more on page 13



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The Balancing Act: General Manager Tené Harris

While businesses inside The Gallery at South DeKalb and throughout the United States operate leaner and require more from their employees, Tené Harris is meeting that expectation head on. Even with all the pressures of being responsible for the day-to-day operations, she carves out time to be away from the mall and take care of herself and home.

As general manager, Harris works a hectic schedule overseeing a staff of 30 and more than 100 tenants at the 880,000-square-foot property in Decatur, Georgia. In her evolving role, Harris is responsible for the marketing of the shopping center and continuing to make sure the urban community mall meets the expectations of its shoppers. When she's done with her 50-hour plus work week, Harris unwinds at her beautiful, spacious home in Lithonia, where walls bathed in mustard serve as the backdrop for comfortable, earth-toned furnishings. Her gated community, a short distance away from the mall, allows her the ability to "pop up when they least expect it" when she wants to check on things "as any general manager should do," Harris said.

But when she's not popping up at the nearly 40-year-old mall during non-office hours in casual clothes, working with tenants or the staff, she works on balancing personal and work life. "I like watching television, reading and just chilling out," said the 33-year-old who counts T.I. and Beyonce among her favorite musical artists.

Away from home, Harris enjoys relaxing at warm destinations, where the ocean and beach are nearby, and did I mention she gets no blackberry reception for emails in these locations. "I love Miami's South Beach, Jamaica and the Bahamas," said Harris. "I am still mastering the art of playing just as hard as I work".

And as much as she enjoys warm spots, Harris also enjoys heating things up in the kitchen. She likes to throw down on spaghetti, macaroni and cheese, barbecued chicken and greens. "I can cook just about anything, but those are some of my favorites," said Harris, who learned how to prepare the dishes she loves by taking instructions from her mom, Veida Harris, and maternal grandmother, Rosa Barnes, over the telephone.

"When I was in college, I would call them and they would tell me how to make whatever I wanted to cook. I would add my own flavor to their recipes," said Harris.

Harris, who grew up in Baltimore, received her bachelor of arts degree in Mass Media Arts from Hampton University in Virginia. After graduating from Hampton in 1998, she returned to Baltimore to work as a marketing coordinator for Mondawmin Mall.

Harris eventually relocated to Atlanta, working her way up the corporate ladder with Thor Equities, which owns The Gallery at South DeKalb. Harris marked her five-year anniversary with the company in May. She says the milestone is a turning point in celebrating her accomplishments.

"It's been an amazing five years. Thor has afforded me with so many opportunities and exposed me to so many different aspects of the business, I am exhausted at the end of the week but extremely grateful," said Harris.



And she and Thor are not done yet. Although they placed a feather in their cap for the return of movies to South DeKalb (the theater opened last April), Harris says there is still work left to do.

"I plan to continue to work with Thor as we are committed to continuously improving the shopping experience and have plans to bring something exciting to the vacant anchor space formerly occupied by Amazing Rooms," said Harris.

With the opening of a new performing arts center near the mall, and the area forever changing in terms of population, Harris said Thor is focused on bringing more retail and dining options that will enhance DeKalb County's live-work-and-play initiatives. Professionally, Harris looks forward to one day assuming even greater responsibility with her employer by becoming a regional property manager.

"This year's election clearly demonstrated that women and African-Americans can shatter the glass ceiling, and anything is possible," said Harris.

Even closer to her, she mentions "a woman assists our CEO in the running of Thor." While Harris won't go into details about her personal life, she best sums it up by stating, "I am complete."

At-A-Glance Tene Harris

Age: 33

Native: Baltimore

Lives In: Lithonia

Relationship Status: Very Happily Attached (during this interview we noticed some carats, and she was not cooking)

Favorite Clothing Article: Denim

Favorite Accessory: Handbags and Shoes

Fashion Sense: She credits her parents for their influence (her dad Dwight Harris was featured in the *Baltimore Sun* for best dressed in February 2006).

cont'd from page 11

Did you know this about the holidays?

Christmas Carols

The pre-carol song "Glory to God in the Highest" was ordered to be sung by Roman Christians, Bishop Telephorus of Rome, A.D. 129.

Carol music was in Western Europe well before 1020. The prototype was the French *carole*, a secular ring dance. Carols evolved despite the Edict of Rouen (7th century) banning caraulas (dancing and leaping songs). They developed in the vernacular, outside the church and were spread by traveling minstrels. They were adapted as religious music, *carol laudi* (pious lyrics), by St. Francis in the 13th century. The word 'carol' was in the English language by 1300 as a song bearing both a burden and refrain.

Dickens' *Christmas Carol*, 1843, further associated carols with Christmas. "The First Nowell" is one of oldest known carols. "Angels We Have Heard on High" was composed around 1290.

The Candy Cane

It was not long after Europeans began using Christmas trees that special decorations were used to adorn them. Food items such as candies and cookies were used predominately, and straight white candy sticks were one of the confections used as ornamentation. Legend has it that during the 17th century, craftsmen created the white sticks of candy in the shape of shepherds' crooks at the suggestion of the choirmaster at the Cologne Cathedral in Germany. In 1847, German immigrant August Imgard used the candy cane to decorate a Christmas tree in Wooster, Ohio. More than 50 years later, Bob McCormack of Albany, Georgia, supposedly made candy canes as treats for family, friends and local shopkeepers.

More recent explanations of the candy cane's symbolism hold that the color white represents Christ's purity, the red the blood he shed and the presence of three red stripes the Holy Trinity.

Gifts

Gift giving was common during the Roman Saturnalia (ancient festival of Saturn in December), a period of general merrymaking and a predecessor of Christmas. Nuns in France started giving gifts to the poor on the eve of St. Nicholas' Saint's Day, 13th century.

In the 1820's in America, borrowing from the New York Dutch, gift giving was transferred from giving to the poor to gifts for the children from parents. This started Christmas commercialization. Christmas shopping was encouraged to overcome the 1839-40 depression.

Christmas Colors

The colors may come from a composite of St. Nicholas's Greek Orthodox Bishop vestment (red) and Woden (English Father Christmas source with green robe). The green of Woden would represent the Celto-Germanic idea of evergreens surviving through the winter and representing the renewal of life.

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Soul Survivor Motivates Others to Work Out

By Matthew Jefferson

Ruby Crews never took an exercise class before she set foot in Joanna Ward's fitness session in Decatur three years ago. Crews was enthralled then and remains so now — not just with the workouts but with Ward's infectious spirit and motivational urgings. "The inspiration she brings to the class is just exceptional," said Crews, who asked that her age not be disclosed but said she was one of the oldest members of the class.

Crews said she likes that Ward is so thorough in preparing individuals, explaining that one's pulse and blood pressure are taken, and body fat, weight and height are measured before exercise begins. Instructors also give advice on diet. "She just does the whole gamut," said Crews enthusiastically. "I know now how to take care of my body and how to continue to do that."

Since beginning the classes, Crews has been one of the devoted members of Ward's Tuesday evening classes. Crews is one of the 20 or 30 regulars who work out to contemporary and gospel music while doing aerobics, toning, cardio and more.

Ward said the 30 or so regulars are part of a larger roster of 300 people who have participated in her weekly free workout sessions over the years.

Ward, who was a contestant on the reality TV show *Survivor* and spent several gruesome days in the Amazon, said that what is now The Gallery at South DeKalb (formerly South DeKalb Mall) is where she shopped while growing up in metro-Atlanta. She considers the classes her way of giving back to the community. That's why she and her instructors donate their time and there are no fees.

One of the reasons for the longevity and success of the fitness program is the surrounding community, according to Ward, who said she was surprised to learn that the mall has a large number of mall walkers — about 90 regular walkers or so — and that many of them are 60 years of age and older. "People in this community really are active people," said Ward.

The one-hour class, held 7-8pm on Tuesdays at the mini-mall building behind The Gallery at South DeKalb, is open to anyone; people of various ages attend. "We try to make it as fun as possible," said Ward.

Hilton and Mary Gay, a couple who have been attending the sessions since they began and who are also among the mall walkers agree. "She is excellent," said Mary Gay of Joanna Ward. "We got a real good workout."

Her husband Hilton said he appreciates that she shares advice on staying physically, nutritionally and spiritually healthy. And the fact that the classes are conveniently located for them and free is a bonus, he added.

One of Ward's favorite success stories is about a woman who was on medication for high blood pressure and began attending the workouts. Over time she also changed her eating habits and followed Ward's suggestions to make other lifestyle modifications. Those measures were so successful that the woman's physician reduced her dosage of medication due to the changes that took place.



The fitness program is not a one-woman show. Ward is aided in running it by her sister Nancy.

Nancy Ward became involved in fitness two years ago as she approached her 40th birthday. She had become overweight but was determined to get back in shape. Nancy enlisted her sister as her personal trainer and although the two were living some 600 miles apart, Joanna got her moving. In fact, Nancy recalls that Joanna wasn't shy about calling her at 5am and insisting that she get out of bed to work out.

The result was that Nancy dropped 40 pounds and in time became a certified fitness instructor. She relocated to metro-Atlanta from Maryland a year ago.

Nancy Ward said the Tuesday evening class members are extremely loyal. "They come out in the rain, the cold," she said. "They realize the importance of exercise to maintain health."

Nancy Ward said she shares her personal journey with the class to keep them motivated and on track. "If I can do it, you can do it," she says is what she tells them.

MOVES, continued from page 11

"It was very challenging when I was first promoted," said Royal. "I felt I would lose friends."

While initially she wanted to shy away from some of the tough issues, she soon learned to speak her mind to co-workers and uphold company policies. "You might bump heads [with friends] sometimes. Ultimately they have to understand you may be friends but you have to hold your ground."

She headed off to Athens to attend the University of Georgia in pursuit of a psychology degree, and even there she worked part time at a Chick-fil-A store there. However, she soon began to question if she should pursue a career in management at Chick-fil-A. "It's not just about cooking chicken.

It's about building emotional connections with people," she said.

She's now taking a year off from school, working

at the mall restaurant and considering her options. She said she knows that she wants to finish school including getting a master's degree, and in the



Demonde "Bo" Hutchins

meantime you can find Antasha at The Gallery at South DeKalb's Chick-Fil-A. It's no secret that The Gallery at South DeKalb's Footlocker store performs on such a level that it has the distinction

month, he's been at the South DeKalb store for three years and with the company since 1996.

Recruiting the right people to be part of his team is the secret to his success, he said. "I have a great core around me. That helps me look good."

Part of keeping his team happy is listening to their suggestions about the latest fashions and even how to run things in different ways. Of course, there's also the goal of providing good customer service. "I'm in the people business," he explained. "It's about taking care of people. People are going to shop where they feel appreciated."

Hutchins, 33, said he hasn't faced any particular issues in his career related to his age. "It boils down to respect. Whatever you give out, you are going to get back. They respect me, and they understand it's business."

He said he tries to inspire others by sharing his experiences climbing the corporate ladder and emphasizing that anything is possible for those willing to listen and learn.

A Promise of Change

By Will Richardson

As the nation prepares to usher out one president and his administration and welcome in another, we asked several of The Gallery at South DeKalb merchants to share their views on president-elect Barack Obama's historic election and what they expect will occur in the months and years to come.

Robert Randolph, owner of R&R Embroidery, is very optimistic about the future. He said he anticipates gradual change and believes Obama will follow the recommendations of his advisers and do what's in the best interest of the country. "I just feel things are going to get better since he's in office," said Randolph. "Now I see that as a merchant, as an entrepreneur, as a small business owner, it's time to step up our game. If you can visualize it, if you can dream it, he proved you can do it. Because he won, people feel a little hope that things can and will get better."



Robert Randolph

Asked how long it will be before changes are realized, Randolph said, "I think change will come close to the end of his first term but really in his second term."



Chyi Yunn Jou

Chyi Yunn Jou, owner of the Auntie Anne's franchise store in the mall, also said he believes the country will be headed to better times with a new president taking over.

"For me as a minority, I am very pleased," said Jou. "The United States is a promised land. Anyone who tries hard can make it. As a businessman, [there will be] better opportunities."

Jou acknowledges that the United States has a tremendous number of dire circumstances to contend with. "What we are facing right now we never faced before," he said.

However Jou, who is originally from Taiwan but has resided in the United States for 29 years, added that Obama represents

hope for change, not only here but throughout the world. This father of a 12-year-old son and 10-year-old daughter added that now he truly can encourage his children to pursue whatever they want to do in life, that there are no limits.



Malkia Darensburg-Jackson

The owner of Heritage, a kiosk selling afrocentric items such as T-shirts with inspirational messages, Malkia Darensburg-Jackson, said the outcome of the historic election has changed her attitude from being cynical to being proud and embracing hope.

"I was very cynical about this country," said Darensburg-Jackson. "For the first time I really felt like an American. I really felt I was included. I have a renewed sense of confidence in the government."

And she said people from various walks of life and various races and nationalities have been stopping by her kiosk to purchase Obama commemorative buttons, posters and T-shirts. She said Obama brings a "fresh new understanding" to the nation's most pressing issues. "He gives me renewed hope. This country really can live up to its creed. This is an opportunity for us to seize the moment."

Edna Scott, spends four days a week tending to her janitorial duties at The Gallery at South Dekalb and says she's still "stunned" by the election. This lively 70-something active senior, who walks to work, has lived through some of the darkest moments in our history and is elated yet surprised that she has seen the election of the first African-American President of the United States in her lifetime. Scott said, "I am happy about what this election says about our country and how far we've come."



Edna Scott

Scott is hopeful that the new administration will address the rising unemployment rates and lack of affordability for healthcare. But she cautions that change takes time "we all must be patient," Scott points out.

cont'd from page 13

Did you know this about the holidays?

Samuel Sharpe

Sam Sharpe, or 'Daddy' Sam Sharpe, as he was also known, is remembered for his leading role in the Christmas revolution of 1831.

Sharpe, a Creole slave, was born in Montego Bay, Jamaica, in 1801. Self-educated, he joined the church and became a Baptist minister and spokesman for the abolition movement. Sharpe spent time preaching, spreading his message, educating the slaves and inspiring peaceful resistance.

His plan of passive resistance — where the slaves would refuse to work on Christmas Day unless their grievances about their working conditions were acknowledged by plantation owners — accelerated into a full scale rebellion.

The 1831 Christmas Rebellion, as it became known, started in St. James and spread throughout the entire island. The Rebellion began on December 28 and lasted for eight days. The events started when the Kensington Estate Great House was burned down, and over the following days, more estates burned, crops were destroyed and violence ensued.

The retribution that followed, was swift, up to 500 slaves were executed after trial. Sharpe named as the instigator, was eventually captured and hung at the Parade in Montego Bay, now renamed Sam Sharpe Square.

The Christmas Rebellion of 1831, was a key event in the fight for the abolishment of slavery. Just a few years later in 1834, slavery would be abolished, and the System of Apprenticeship instituted. On August 1, 1938 the Apprenticeship System ended granting full freedom to the slaves of Jamaica.

Kwanzaa

Doctor Maulana Karenga, a Professor at California State University in Long Beach, California, created Kwanzaa in 1966. It is a holiday celebrated by millions of African-Americans around the world, encouraging them to remember their African heritage and consider their current place in America today. Kwanzaa is celebrated from December 26 to January 1 and involves seven principles called Nguzo Saba: Umoja (Unity), Kujichagulia (Self-determination), Ujima (Collective Work and Responsibility), Ujamaa (Cooperative Economics), Nia (Purpose), Kuumba (Creativity), and Imani (Faith).

In the Kwanzaa ritual, seven candles, called Mishumaa Saba, are placed in a Kinara, or candleholder, which is then set upon the Mikeka, a mat usually made of straw. Three green candles are placed on the left, three red candles on the right and a black candle in the center, each candle representing one of the seven principles of the celebration. One candle is lit each day of the Kwanzaa celebration, beginning from left to right.

The colors of Kwanzaa — black, red and green — also have a special significance. Black symbolizes the faces of the African people, red symbolizes the blood they have shed and green represents hope and the color of the motherland. The name itself, Kwanzaa, is a Swahili word meaning "fruits of the harvest." ❄

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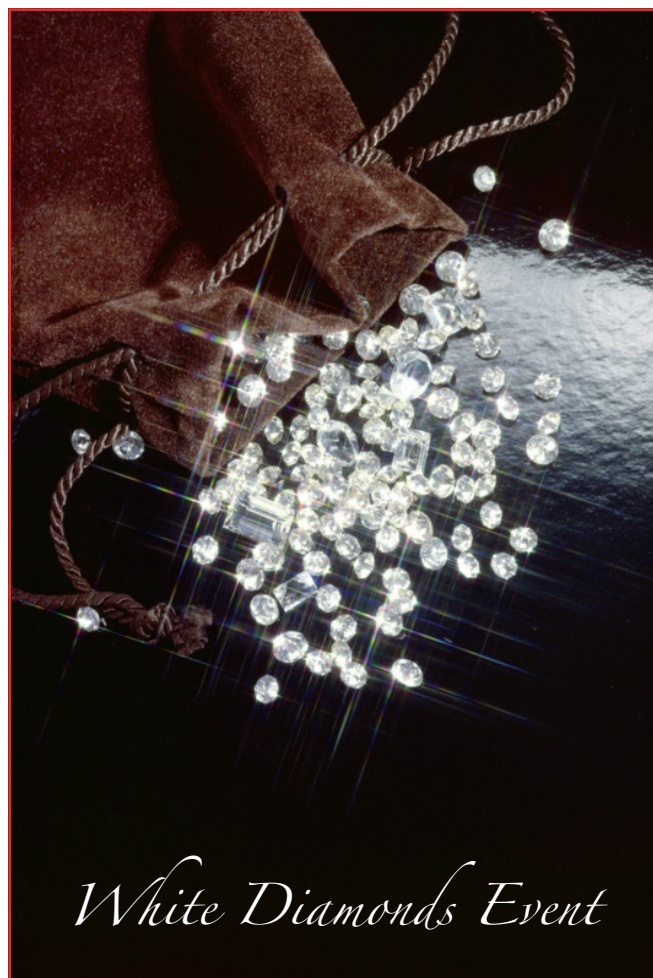
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7 12:30pm - 6:30pm	8 10am - 9pm	9 10am - 9pm	10 10am - 9pm	11 10am - 9pm	12 10am - 9pm	13 10am - 9pm
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21 11am - 8pm Open extra late! →	22 9am - 11pm	23 9am - 11pm	24 Christmas Eve 8am - 8pm	25 Christmas Mall Closed	26 9am - 10pm Kwanzaa Dec. 26 - Jan. 1 →	27 9am - 10pm
28 12:30pm - 6:30pm Kwanzaa Dec. 28 - Jan. 1 →	29 10am - 9pm	30 10am - 9pm	31 New Year's Eve 10am - 6pm	1 10am - 6pm	2 10am - 9pm	3 10am - 9pm
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