

Christmas season fosters job opportunities

By Suzanne Teten
Daily Nebraskan Staff Reporter

Editor's note: This is the last article in a five-part series on the fun, festivities, economics and headaches of the holiday season.

Shoppers crowd the aisles. Cash registers ring as people stand in long lines complaining about the seemingly endless wait.

For many Lincoln residents, the days between Thanksgiving and Dec. 25 are synonymous with the busiest, most hectic time of the year. But for others, it means welcome job opportunities during the Christmas season, according to several Lincoln business people.

Paula Luther, personnel manager for Miller & Paine, 13th & O Streets, said the department

store increases the work hours of its part-time employees to meet the needs of more customers. In addition, she said, the store hires about 50 extra employees for the gift-wrapping department and the Christmas decoration shop.

Luther said Miller & Paine hires seasonal employees in early November.

If other part-time work is available in the store after the Christmas season, the Christmas employees will be considered for that work. If they don't find other work in the store, she said, they probably will be hired again next Christmas.

"There are a number of people we bring back year after year," she said.

K-Mart, 4601 Vine St., hired about 30 holiday employees this year, said Sharon Halvorsen, per-

sonnel manager. The store hired about 10 more employees than last year because of extended hours.

Some of the seasonal employees will keep their jobs after the Christmas rush. K-Mart usually hires five Christmas employees permanently, Halvorsen said.

Most of the new employees work as cashiers from eight to 30 hours a week. Halvorsen said about 75 percent of K-Mart's Christmas workers are high school and college students. She said she likes to hire students because she can work around their flexible schedules.

K-Mart started hiring workers in mid-October, she said, "to have everyone trained and ready for the Christmas rush."

Sears Roebuck and Co. at Gateway Shopping Center, hires 20 to 25 employees for the Christmas

season, said Paulette Bard, training supervisor.

Bard said many Sears employees started working for the company as temporary Christmas workers. Sears will keep many temporary Christmas employees this year, she said, because the store is being remodeled.

Most of the new employees work

on the sales floors and as cashiers. Others gift-wrap customers' purchases and carry large packages to customers' cars, Bard said. Most of the new employees are college students who began working in late October.

"We want everybody hired and trained before Thanksgiving hits," Bard said.

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Downtown Business Watch helps merchants 'spread word' on crime

By Barbara Comito
Daily Nebraskan Staff Reporter

As Christmas approaches and the number of shoplifting and other theft-related incidents increase, area businesses need all the help they can get to protect their wares.

The newly formed Downtown Lincoln Business Watch Association helps them do just that.

The goal of the association is to be an educational group on crime prevention, not a vigilante group, said Regina Thompson, program chairwoman.

The program has two basic functions: Educating merchants through monthly meetings on various aspects of crime prevention and preventing specific crimes through "calling rings." Calling rings consist of one merchant calling his or her neighbor merchant, who calls another neighbor and so on to spread word of potential dangers.

The program, which had its first organizational meeting in mid-September, was tested during its initial stages by an armed robbery at the downtown Lincoln Federal Savings & Loan Association on Oct. 30.

The merchants' calling rings provided investigating officers with "additional eyes and ears," Thompson said.

The suspect was spotted two or three times and officers were only 15 to 30 seconds behind each time, Thompson said.

Discretion and caution were stressed when disseminating information, Thompson said.

Business merchants and the police department work together in Business Watch as "side-by-side partners," Thompson said.

"The common merchant needs knowledge," Thompson said, and Lincoln's officers are willing to provide that free of charge.

Last month's educational meeting was on armed robbery, and one of the points stressed was the

importance of remembering information that might lead to the suspect's arrest.

Two pieces of tape on the wall might help the merchant remember whether the suspect's height was under, over or between the two lines.

If the suspect had pointed a gun at the merchant, trying to remember whether a pen might have fit down the barrel would help officers later to determine whether the weapon was a revolver or an automatic.

Increased awareness is a definite benefit of Business Watch, Thompson said. Merchants are getting to know other merchants in their area as well as the police officers, he said.

Similar programs are being organized at Gateway, East Park Plaza and other areas, said Lincoln police officer Vern Campbell. Eventually, the organizations will probably combine and "umbrella" the whole city," Thompson said.

Defense attorney...

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The misdemeanor charge of obstructing government operations particularly hinges on Copple's and Douglas' testimony. Copple said early in the trial that Douglas came to Copple's office in the basement of Commonwealth and showed him the FBI letter documenting the possible charges against Copple and other Commonwealth officers.

"I did not discuss the letter with Marvin Copple," Douglas testified Tuesday.

Copple also said that Douglas informed him that state Banking Department attorney Barry Lake has uncovered Copple's alleged theft of \$500,000 from Commonwealth.

"I did not talk to Marvin Copple about that," Douglas said.

Valentino said that Morrow's attempt to discredit Copple would not work.

"Who had the most to lose?" Valentino asked the jurors then pointed toward Douglas.

Although Copple was the prosecution's star witness, Valentino told the jury that other testimony and videotapes of Douglas' testimony before the Commonwealth committee gave plenty of evidence to convict Douglas.

The written documents also weigh against Douglas, Valentino said. The Domina/Miller report showed Douglas' lies on paper, he said, and the videotape of the Commonwealth committee show him lying again. Douglas' tax

returns prove that he lied about his income and profited from it, Valentino said.

Valentino said there is no doubt that Douglas knowingly made false statements and financial entries.

Douglas did so to try to clear himself, he said.

"You don't want to be tied to the big stink, because if it happens you're going down with it," Valentino said.

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