

Pokemon popularity

■ Pocket monster is one of the most in-demand presents this season.

BY SARA GARDNER
Staff writer

Every holiday season, a new toy item comes along and adds to the holiday spirit.

Nearly every child that year is filled with excitement and yearning for that toy. At the same time, nearly every adult is filled with anxiety and fear trying to get his or her hands on that toy.

This year, all of those emotions center around a little monster.

Pokemon began as a Japanese cartoon but is quickly becoming a popular commodity all over the United States.

The little character called Pokemon, which in Japanese means pocket monster, can be seen in nearly any store in the form of Nintendo games, movies, plush toys and cards.

The Pokemon cards are, by far, the hardest items to keep in stock, said Robert Holmes, store manager at Kay-bee Toys in Gateway Mall, 61st and O streets.

"The cards are hard to come by," Holmes said. "Two boxes containing 144 packs are usually gone within two days."

The cards made by Nintendo and Wizards of the Coast can not only be collected, but played as a card game as well.

That's one of the reasons Pokemon has become so popular, said Patrick Dolan, owner of Pat's Sports Cards and Collectibles, 48th and O streets.

"It's a fad. The kids have fun collecting, playing and trading the cards," Dolan said. "The game offers a new twist. It involves playing a game and thinking."

Children enjoy collecting the cards, but that is not the only reason Pokemon has become so famous, said Merlin Hayes, co-owner of HobbyTown USA at Eastpark Plaza, 66th and O streets.

"Since it began as a cartoon, it gained a lot of popularity with the kids," Hayes said. "They really enjoyed the show, and now they can collect it."

The game requires 61 cards, but some cards are not as valuable as others, Holmes said.

"Just because someone owns 61 cards, it doesn't necessarily mean they have a good deck," Holmes said. "The card game is like rock, paper, scissors. Some are more valuable."

Every Sunday, HobbyTown USA holds a tournament for the card game, Hayes said.

"We see between 25 and 50 people here every week," Hayes said. "Not just kids are playing, either. It is a game that Mom and Dad can play and enjoy because it requires light strategy."

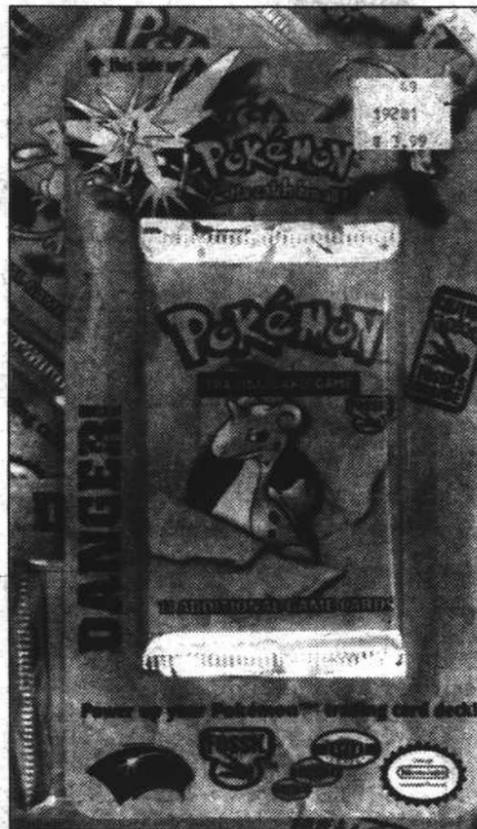
Store owners are also seeing some adults buying the cards for themselves.

"Junior high students mainly buy the cards," Dolan said. "But some adults are looking for them, too."

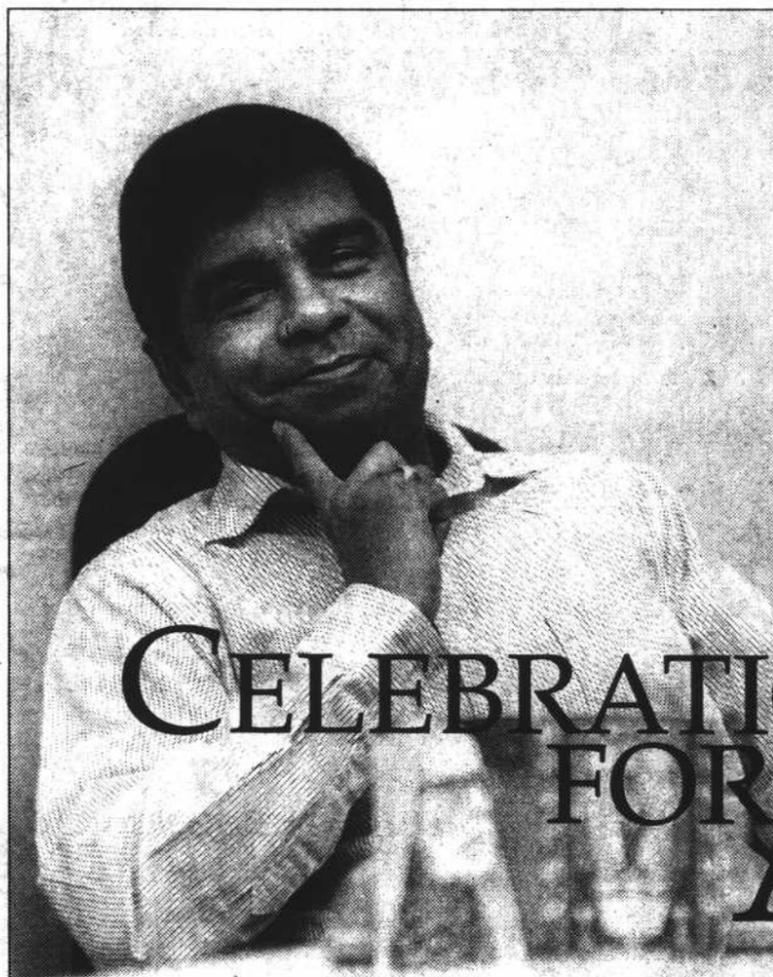
The cards are not the only hot Pokemon seller.

"We are selling a lot of other Pokemon toys," Hayes said. "We have Pokemon animals, backpacks, keychains and clocks."

"Anything Pokemon is very popular right now."



JOSH WOLFE/DN
POKEMON trading cards are expected to become this year's hot holiday gift.



CELEBRATIONS FOR ALL

Students honor variety of holidays

BY MICHELLE STARR
Staff writer

Not everyone's holiday season twinkles red-and-green Christmas lights, celebrates baby Jesus or has a fat jolly man as its mascot.

Some University of Nebraska-Lincoln students celebrate this season in different ways or take part in the Christian holidays only for fun.

Including enjoyment and annoyance, mixed feelings surround the holiday season for non-Christians.

"I'm not a Christian, but we accept the holidays," said Jiong Yu, a graduate chemistry student from China.

Youngtag Jang, a doctoral business management student from South Korea, agreed that even though he was not religious, he still practiced the Christian holidays.

"We celebrate Christmas for fun," Jang said.

For some students, this time of year might be fun, but others said they feel uncomfortable or isolated.

"It's a very hard time for Jews. It's my least favorite time of year. You're constantly bombarded by another person's religion," said Melanie Richter, a UNL graduate student from Lincoln.

Some people forget that there are religions other than Christianity, Richter said, and she wants to make these people aware of other religions.

When greeted with the holiday welcome, "Merry Christmas," Richter said sometimes she took the time to say, "Thank you, but actually I'm Jewish."

David Wiesser, a Jewish graduate student from Lincoln, doesn't feel the same way.

The Christian greetings are meant with good intent, Wiesser said.

He also said he understood the assumption that he was Christian and automatically assumes others he

meets in Lincoln are Christian because of the high population of Christians, Wiesser said.

Other non-Christians accepted Christian celebrations as part of the culture.

Ram Bishu, a Hindu from India and UNL professor of industrial and management systems engineering, participates socially in Christian holidays.

Bishu will string lights on his Christmas tree and place presents underneath it, but he will not attend a church service, he said.

Among Hindus, Christmas is accepted and respected as a religious holiday, Bishu said, adding that about 3 percent of India's population is Christian.

"I come from a country with a background of religions and respecting religions of all the world," Bishu said.

Jang agreed and said Christianity and Buddhism are practiced in South Korea.

Baha'is have a slightly different view of the Christian holidays, said Katie Bodie, a freshman undeclared major at UNL.

Baha'is believe each religion has had a different prophet, Bodie said. With Christ being the Christian prophet, people therefore recognize Christmas as an important holiday, Bodie said.

Though they believe in the importance of Christ to Christians, the Baha'is have their own prophet, Baha'u'llah, which means the glory of God.

Whether a Baha'i celebrates Christmas and to what extent they celebrate is up to the individual.

SHARON KOLBET/DN
RAM BISHU, a professor of industrial and management systems engineering, sits in front of a postcard of the Hindu goddess Shakti. Bishu has found ways to celebrate his Hindu beliefs as well as traditional Christmas rituals.

Regardless of the religion, Christian holidays have affected non-Christian holidays.

Though Richter celebrates Hanukkah, she said it was a minor Jewish holiday, intensified only by its time of celebration.

"The holiday just happens to fall in December. It's not on the same scale as Christmas," Richter said.

Gifts might not even be a part of Hanukkah if it weren't for Christmas, Richter said.

Wiesser agreed that presents weren't

important to Jews during Hanukkah.

Wiesser said although he stopped celebrating Hanukkah with gifts a long time ago, gift-giving is a nice gesture at any time of the year.

If someone offered him a gift on Dec. 25, he said he would accept it and not be upset that the gift was not given during Hanukkah.

The more important Jewish holidays, Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur, are celebrated 10 days apart in September and signify the Jewish new year.

Both Richter and Wiesser agree that people should learn about other people's religions, but Wiesser did not expect people to be experts.

"I'm a realist, and I don't expect anyone to know the ins and outs of my theological preference," Wiesser said.

Wiesser said the marketing issues surrounding the holidays might overshadow the holiday.

"The commercialism generated by Christmas is astounding," Wiesser said. "I think a lot of times Christians have an Easter Bunny and a Christmas tree, and that's the extent

"I'm not a Christian, but we accept the holidays."

-Jiong Yu

UNL graduate chemistry student