

ComfortZone



FRUGAL BOOKSTORE

ERIN CLARK/GLOBE STAFF/FILE



UNION SQUARE

CRAIG F. WALKER/GLOBE STAFF/FILE



BELMONT BOOKS

JONATHAN WIGGS/GLOBE STAFF/FILE



HENRY BEAR'S PARK

DAVID L. RYAN/GLOBE STAFF/FILE

By Kara Baskin
GLOBE CORRESPONDENT

This year, it's even more essential to support small, independent businesses. It's soothingly mechanical to click over to Amazon and wait for a brown box to arrive — but that's not going to help the thousands of families around Boston who've poured their hopes into a small shop, a tiny studio, a life's passion. Shop local isn't a hashtag; it's a life-line.

It's not just about altruism, either. These places are genuinely amazing. Handmade bibs, 3-D earrings straight out of Studio 54, thoughtfully curated books, on and on. We live in an area brimming with creative people who possess outside talent. Now it's on us to support them.

In that spirit, here's a local shopping guide for families. This list is by no means exhaustive. It's a mere sampling of the wonderful, diverse places in our area that local parents have recommended and loved (me included). Have a favorite? Let me know at kara.baskin@globe.com.

BOOKS

Belmont Books

Can't find your favorite title? The friendly folks at Belmont Books are happy to special-order it for you (and an actual human will e-mail you to update you on shipping!). A kids' book club, an in-house cafe, and a jam-packed calendar of virtual events make this shop feel like a social and intellectual hub, even during pandemics. www.belmont-books.com

Book Rack

In ordinary times, this cozy Arlington shop is perfect for a rainy day perusal; now they offer browsing by appointment, plus curbside pickup and delivery. But the true distinction? A wonderful trade-in program that allows you to drop off

your gently loved books for store credit. www.book-rack.com

Book Shop of Beverly Farms

At this 50-plus-year-old shop in a bright-yellow house, browse by appointment, enjoy a curated list of YA and younger readers, and snag signed copies. www.bookshopofbeverlyfarms.com

Frugal Bookstore

This dynamic independent Roxbury shop stocks an eclectic list of titles with an eye to politics, current events, and activism. www.frugal-bookstore.net

Silver Unicorn

This independent bookshop anchors West Acton Center, which is slowly transforming into a cute downtown. They offer curbside pickup, free delivery to certain ZIP codes, and insightful staff picks. Of note: a deeply curated list for teens. www.silverunicornbooks.com

POP-UPS

2020 Holiday Collective at Legacy Place

This weekend and next, visit Dedham's Legacy Place for the Black-Owned Bos. Holiday Collective, featuring local makers with tons of family-friendly treats: Fusion Dolls, House of Art and Craft, Stinky's Kittens & Doggies Too, and



more. For the full lineup, see black-owned-bos.square.site/s/stories/2020-holiday-collective-at-legacy-place.

Holiday Cr[EAT]or at Boston Public Market

Visit BPM this weekend and next to browse indie makers: Get handmade baby gear at Knotted by Coco; paintings from Erin Jackson Art (proceeds provide feminine supplies to those in need); snugly winter apparel from Plainview Farm, knitted from alpaca fur; and lots more. It's open Friday through Sunday from 10 a.m. through Dec. 20. www.boston-publicmarket.org

Union Square Holiday Stroll

Visit Union Square in Somerville on Saturday, Dec. 12, when local storefronts offer promotions and giveaways: gift-making sessions for kids and parents at Artisan Asylum; peppermint stick ice cream at Gracie's; letter-writing to Santa at 4GoodVibes. See the full roster at www.unionsquaremain.org. Want even more ways to celebrate the city's indie businesses? Check out their Diversity Catalogue to see the true breadth of the city's offerings. www.somervillema.gov/sites/default/files/diversity-catalog.pdf

www.unionsquaremain.org

QUIRKY & FUN

Best of British

If you have a child who loves tea parties, Best of British is a must: This proper British sip shop in Newburyport has authentic imports from the United Kingdom and Ireland, from teas to treats to proper table settings. www.bestofbritishnbpt.com

Fawn Over Me

Handmade baby accessories crafted by maker Christine Brown in her Worcester home studio, from bibs to organic wooden teething rings to rattles shaped like hamburgers. fawnoverme.squarespace.com

Henry Bear's Park

Indie toy shops are getting harder and harder to find these days, but Henry Bear's Park continues to thrive, with locations throughout suburban Boston and Rhode Island. Check out their thoughtful At Home idea guides designed to stave off stir-craziness. www.henrybear.com/

Joy Street Life + Home

This adorable storefront in West Concord stocks lots of baby gifts — plus a section of unicorns and mermaids (jewels, puzzles, key chains). Adults will enjoy the snarky 2020 memorabilia and cheeky sock collection. www.joystreetgifts.com

Lilah Rose

Locals love this Melrose spot, which is a toy store wonderland as in days of old: shelves brimming with puzzles, classic games (Parcheesi, anyone?), Calico Critters, and more, all with curbside pickup and delivery. www.lilahrosemelrose.com

The Merry Lion

This Wakefield shop sells funny kids' clothing (why not buy a "Pies Before Guys" sweatshirt for your tot?), plus toys like dinosaur play-dough and gifts for grown-ups too. www.shopthemerrylion.com

Nantucket Kids

Mom of three Andrea Romito owns this preppy hideout at Hingham's Derby Street Shops, your spot for matching kid-and-parent pajamas, plaid seersucker bow ties (for next year's parties), and sea-themed toys. www.nantucketkids.com

Omar's World of Comics and Hobbies

This cheery Lexington shop is run by Omar Masood, a young man with Down syndrome who absolutely loves superheroes. His store is filled with comics, board games, and trading cards. www.omarsworldofcomics.com

Owen + Sage

Shop baby goods curated by local mom Sarah Taylor DeHaan at a pop-up in Natick (Wednesdays through Sundays) and at new brick-and-mortar Nan's Market in Stow. The focus is on small makers, eco-friendly artisans, and brands that give to charity. Toys? Bibs? Loungewear for mini-activists? It's all here. Delivery throughout MetroWest is free, too. www.owenandsage.com

Happy shopping — and supporting.

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The ghosts of Bradlees, Spag's, and Whalom Park have returned from the great beyond, in T-shirt form

By Christopher Muther
GLOBE STAFF

For those of us who grew up in New England, looking at T-shirts from Jamaica Plain-based Local Vyntage is unexpectedly thrilling. They remind us of a lost era when discount department stores were not all national chains and amusement parks possessed local flavor, and probably more than a few unsafe rides. Local Vyntage produces shirts featuring logos of stores where you might have purchased your first VCR (Lechmere), your first pair of acid wash jeans (Caldor), or gone to your first concert (Great Woods).

Extra points if you remember Mrs. B.

"We have oddly nostalgic feelings about department stores of all things," said Chet Winnicki, who started Local Vyntage after he lost his job in health care. "There's just something about it that feels warm and nice about the memories of these places."

Winnicki, a Connecticut native, fondly recalls his great aunt giving him a few dollars to buy toys at Caldor, and he hears similar stories from customers who are excited to show their retro lo-

MEMORIES TO WEAR

cal pride. The T-shirts are priced on the higher side (\$32), which is something customers frequently point out to Winnicki.

"I always hear about the irony that I'm selling shirts that feature discount stores like Bradlees on them, but Bradlees never would have sold such an expensive tee," he said.

We rang Winnicki to reminisce about the many fine New England institutions, such as Ames, Paragon Park, the Worcester Centrum, and Spag's, that are no longer with us, but now live on through his T-shirts.

Q. What was the inspiration to start this?

A. I'm still part of the T-shirt wearing demographic, the generation that wears tees all the time, and I was thinking about things that should be on T-shirts that I couldn't find as a consumer. I think when you're in your thirties feelings of nostalgia start getting stronger [Winnicki is 39], and so these were some of the things I wanted to wear. And then it started growing.

Q. Do you get a lot of requests for specific stores or venues?

A. We do get a lot of requests. When we have customer service interactions, it's often "Hey, can I exchange this T-shirt for a different size," and then "Here's 19 other ideas for shirts that you should do in this area." There's also a lot of "Thank you so much for starting this business. It means so much to my family."

Q. You know, I looked you up on the site to see if you had purchased anything, and I noticed you bought a Caldor shirt last summer. Why did you pick that shirt in particular?

A. I bought it because I used to buy records there when I was a kid, and I was always a fan of that 1970s logo.

Q. What kind of reactions have you gotten when you wear it?

A. I thought I was the one doing the interview here. Reactions to the shirt definitely skew older. People under 30 probably just think Caldor is the name of a new indie band.

Q. Speaking of names and logos, do you ever run into any copyright issues?

A. There's a long answer to that, but the



LOCAL VYNTAGE

New England names from the past like Whalom Park, Caldor, and Bradlees are memorialized on T-shirts from Local Vyntage.

short answer is that every design has its own history. We look at each one, one-by-one, and make a determination if this is something we can or can't move forward with. And if we are going to move forward, you know, how do we move forward? What are the right

ways? We always try to do the right thing. We want to make sure the history of these places is preserved properly.

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