

Retail sector shines during the holidays

PITTSFIELD — This year's holiday shopping season is almost over, but according to the National Retail Federation's annual holiday consumer survey, a holly jolly time was expected to be had by all.

The average shopper was expected to spend \$967 this year, according to the survey. Fifty-four percent of consumers planned to spend about the same as last year, while 24 percent planned to spend more. Shoppers were expected to spend an average of \$608 on gifts for family, friends, and co-workers; \$218 on candy, food and decorations; and \$141 on other nongift purchases for themselves and their families.



Heather Boulger
Inside the Job Market

Did you know that retail is the second largest job sector in Berkshire County? It represents 14.1 percent of a workforce that includes 8,587 total employees. Retail is also one of the country's most technically advanced and innovative sectors, offering varied and rewarding career possibilities. Many retail jobs involve high degrees of skill, whether in food hygiene or nutrition, logistics, planning and construction, design, marketing or buying. Anyone whose job results in a consumer product — from those who supply the raw materials to factory workers to the truck drivers who deliver goods to stores — counts on retail for their livelihood. We often think of big box stores when referring to retail. But the sector is a lot more complex than

that. According to the NRF, 71 percent of retail store businesses have fewer than 10 employees. Some other statistics: the retail industry as a whole supports one out of every four jobs in the U.S. and includes half of all the jobs held by working teenagers. More than one-third of retail employees work part time, while 60 percent are women.

Retail stores also represent the pulse of consumer spending, which accounts for 70 percent of U.S. gross national product.

The influx of online shopping has affected some areas of the retail sector, but the damage isn't as destructive as you might think. Industry research firms say that traditional bricks-and-mortar store locations still generate more than 90 percent of U.S. retail sales. Broken down further, online shoppers generated 59 percent of all

retail business, but visitors to department stores and discount outlets aren't far behind, at 57 percent and 54 percent, respectively. Local/small businesses account for 25 percent of shoppers. Berkshire County knows firsthand the importance of the holiday season for our local retailers, so please shop local this holiday season.

Finally, retail is an industry that allows you to pick any passion and pursue it down an exciting career path, filled with endless opportunities for professional development and career advancement.

Remember: 44 percent of those employed in retail do not work in a sales position. This job sector also includes accountants, artists, computer programmers, merchandise displayers, architects and engineers, protective workers and more. Most retail sector employ-

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- Be active: Don't sit around waiting for your dream job to show up. Volunteer or take part-time, seasonal and/or temporary work. Employers look highly on those who take the initiative and stay positive.
- Get organized. Design a

new resume, post online and be methodical about your job search. Do something relating to your job search every day.

- Avoid bad habits: Get in shape and focus on your health. Do not let those negative voices in your head get the best of you.
- Stay positive: Try to keep a positive, enthusiastic attitude and to be patient.

Understand that it does take time to find employment, but that an upbeat attitude will help you be successful. Today's new education and training opportunity can become tomorrow's job.

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