



Far left, Gaylene Teague, owner of Sweet and Spicey Handcrafted Candles and Gift Shoppe, prepares a display of painted ponies at the downtown store. The Trail of Painted Ponies figurines are popular, she said, because they are unique to New Mexico.

Left, Teague decorates a candy bouquet. Since opening in June 2000, the store has grown from 338 square feet to 2,366 square feet due to increasing demand.

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NEWS-SUN

# Marketing tip is old hat for candle store

**RICHARD TROUT**  
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When marketing guru Jon Schallert visited Hobbs recently, he brought a powerful message about how any retail business has to be known for one thing to be successful.

Whether it's having the largest dime candy selection in the world or having the most unusual variety of bottled soda pop, a business has to excel in a certain area to gain notoriety by word of mouth, and sometimes that can translate to massive media attention — even space in the New York Times or Wall Street Journal.

For some in the audience at Schallert seminar, the message might have been a new lesson. But for Gaylene Teague, owner of Sweet and Spicey Handcrafted Candles and Gift Shoppe, Schallert's message was old hat.

And because it's been something she had been practicing, Teague's managed to attract the new and repeat customers Schallert spoke so

highly of. Teague said a woman from Houston with family in Hobbs visits the business once a year, while a couple from New Hampshire stop by twice a year after their annual vacation to Ruidoso and Cloudcroft.

One of Teague's specialties is right there in the name of the store. When she opened Sweet and Spicey in June 2000, she'd already accomplished a marketing move by inserting "Handcrafted Candles" into the name.

Looking in the phone book, seeing an advertisement, walking by the store, people can't help but be reminded of why Teague opened the store.

Now Teague can not only say she carries handcrafted candles, but also the largest selection of handcrafted candles in Lea County. The store's inventory has increased from 35 candle fragrances in June 2000 to more than 400 currently.

Meanwhile, the store's size has increased from 338 square feet to 2,366

square feet to accommodate the demand.

"I have bought her candles since she opened, and I burn them in my office while I'm at work," said Hobbs Public Library director Cris Adams. "It just makes the day so much more pleasant."

Adams, who buys several candles a month, favors the baking fragrances such as Banana Nut Bread and Chestnuts and Brown Sugar. She couldn't explain why she likes these candles, and joked that burning them has somehow kept her waistline under control while intriguing other Hobbsans.

"It's funny when people come into my office and say, 'Are you baking in here?'" she said.

Where Teague slightly disagrees with Schallert is in the "one thing" businesses should specialize in, as she could name a couple of other products many repeat customers feel they have to have.

For example, the store carries a collectible figurine series called The Trail of Painted Ponies, a New Mexico-based project that started in 2000. Teague started carrying the product two years ago when she realized the marketing draw such a product might have.

The ponies are popular, she said, because they are unique to New Mexico. In 2000, some of the state's artists were commissioned to create life-sized ponies similar to the life-sized cows the city of Chicago sponsored.

"So far, to date, they've done 150 life-sized ponies, and they're scattered throughout New Mexico," Teague said, adding the same company that commissioned the project received a license for the collectibles.

Each pony figurine is numbered and

occasionally some are retired, making them more valuable to collectors.

Sweet and Spicey also follows Schallert's message of using sight, sense and sound to maximum advantage. Every little detail, in other words, can affect whether someone wants to stay and look around.

"We have very relaxing music on, and the (candle) fragrance that's in here," Teague said. "You want to make it a very pleasant atmosphere to where the customer wants to linger and they enjoy the experience. Even if they don't buy anything, they just enjoy being here."

Employees from across the street drop in and say hi just because they like the way it smells, she said.

"We always greet the customer; 'Welcome to Sweet and Spicey; come on in and make yourself at home.'"

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