



Sentinel Photos/BRYAN HUNT

In the PHOTO AT LEFT, Bucheit employee Greg Johnson sets up samples of the Ozark Mountain soda for patrons of Tuesday's Ladies' Night event could test taste. In the PHOTO AT RIGHT, program coordinators Helen Leonhardt, LEFT, and Marilyn Thompson, of the University of Illinois Extension, draw the final name in their giveaway at the event. The pair work in with the Extension's Family and Consumer Science programs.

Ladies' Night draws large crowd at Buchheit of Centralia

BY BRYAN HUNT
SENTINEL NEWS STAFF

The only thing missing was Kool and the Gang's "Ladies' Night."

Scores of shoppers — largely women — filled the main aisle of Buchheit of Centralia Tuesday night, in search of bargains, specials and other activities for the store's fifth annual Ladies' Night.

The store is located on the east end of the Fairview Park Plaza Shopping Center.

Some 16 tables were set up for the event throughout the store, where patrons could register for a variety of prizes — a cruise for two to Mexico, the Bahamas, or the western Caribbean; a \$50 Buchheit gift card; a free tour and tasting at the Crown Valley Winery in Ste. Genevieve County; or a Crown Valley gift basket.

The store also featured one-night-only specials in addition to regular sales throughout the home and farm retailer's local store.

Among the special displays and activities:

- Food safety and canning with Helen Leonhardt and Marilyn Thompson, program coordinators with the University of Illinois Extension's family and consumer science department;
- Potting plants with Master Gardener Lexi Weigel of the Centralia Thyme to Garden Club, and Kathy Kingsley of the University of Illinois Extension;
- Gun safety and conceal-carry course offerings with Kelley Hulsey and Greg Miller of Two Troops Firearms Instruction, LLC;
- Dipping paint demonstrations with Jon Wacker;
- A craft demonstration and workshop with Behind the House Primitives and Country Decor;
- Neck and shoulder massages from the Kaskaskia College massage therapy program students;
- The Centralia Humane Society booth;
- The Kaskaskia College Veterans Tribute table with Dr. Dee Boswell and Jim Beasley;
- Williams Pond Horse Rescue service with Michelle Williams.

Employee Otis Bostick was busy at the main entrance handing out flyers while sharing details of what was happening throughout the store and where.

"There's gift bags, there's food ..." Bostick told the

string of customers entering the doors, as the line backed up a bit.

Gift bags were the first stop for a majority of the patrons taking advantage of the two-hour event. The purple Carhartt bags containing a variety of goodies went to the first 100 women.

"This isn't Black Friday," joked Buchheit employee Verla Keigley, as she and Yvonne Pruitt began to hand out the bags.

Marilyn Rueter stopped by Weigel and Kingsley's table to get a plant she'd picked up potted before roaming the store to do some more shopping.

"Centralia needs this," said Rueter of the store and the event.

She said she and her husband, who farms, are frequent visitors to the store.

"This is a great event for everyone involved," said Weigel, waiting on the next customer.

Weigel worked from a wheelbarrow just at the end of their table, stuffed with potting soil, or "planting medium" as she called it.

Store manager John Hendrickson, busy throughout the store, said of the event, "We've been doing it annually but we're going to do it semi-annually now."

SNACK AND SHOP

Customers with the urge to snack and shop could plate up some chips, salsa, vegetables and dip, cheese and crackers, or cookies to satisfy their sweet tooth.

Buchheit employee Greg Johnson was busy filling sample cups of Ozark Mountain bottled drinks from Branson, Mo., which featured flavors of root beer, red creme, orange, grape, and Ozark Mountain Lemonade. Vicki Rogers stopped by, cart in hand, to sample the red creme soda before moving on.

"Ladies' Night at Buchheit — can't get any better than that," said Hulsey, who was on hand to give details about the firearms-handling courses he and partner Greg Miller offer to the novice and experienced.

The duo have more than 60 years of law-enforcement experience between them as active and retired Illinois State Police troopers.

"You'll understand exactly what you're doing before you pick up a gun," Hulsey told one woman visiting his table



Sentinel Photos/BRYAN HUNT

In the PHOTO ABOVE, Dozens of women get set for the opening hour of Bucheit's fifth Ladies' Night event, held Tuesday in its Centralia store. The first 100 women received special Carhartt gift bags to start the event, which are prepped by Bucheit employees, IN THE PHOTO BELOW, Verla Keigley, LEFT, and Yvonne Pruitt.



about the confidence their course can instill in a student.

Leonhardt and Thompson, whose table held a box of Ball canning jars, a Presto pressure canner, and a jerky maker/dehydrator, representing some of the items that Buchheit sells that supports the programs the Extension offers to the public, Thompson said.

Leonhardt was tasked with drawing the second and final

winner in their giveaway for the night.

Patricia Cripps was called out as the winner of a gift from the University of Illinois' family and consumer science booth, staffed by Helen Leonhardt and Marilyn Thompson. Only Cripps couldn't pick up her prize right away — she was busy getting a massage by a Kaskaskia College massage therapy student.