

FASHION & SHOPPING

For the Love of Local

DELIGHT EVERYONE ON YOUR GIFT LIST AND SUPPORT
A LOCAL BUSINESS THIS HOLIDAY SEASON
BY SHERI RADFORD

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Local stores and eateries are the lifeblood of any community—a sentiment more relevant than ever in this year of unprecedented changes and challenges. Small businesses have been hit particularly hard by the pandemic.

Right now, the bookstore that gave a raffle prize for your child's school fundraiser and the boutique that donated a gift card for your charity's silent auction need your support. And, since you have a list of presents to purchase, why not help your community by skipping Amazon and buying local this year? The shops are following B.C. health regulations for COVID-19—to keep both customers and staff safe—and they offer a wealth of knowledge and personalized service that you won't find online or at a big-box retailer.

"Small businesses are open and ready to serve Vancouverites," says Jane McFadden, executive director, **West 4th BIA**. "I appreciate all of the precautions and steps that ... **Coastal Health** has implemented for small business in Vancouver and we need to support all of those businesses that have invested and educated themselves and their staff on all of the regulations and precautions to make it safe for consumers to shop and dine."

Phyllis Simon, founder of **Kidsbooks**, says, "Local stores are vital to the health of a community."



PHOTO: CREATIVELY YOURS



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Since 1983, she and her staff have been using their encyclopedic knowledge of books and games for children to guide shoppers to the right choice, whether it's for a 12-year-old reluctant reader or an eight-year-old *Diary of a Wimpy Kid* fan. Store visits are currently limited to 20 minutes, but staff are happy to email personalized gift suggestions ahead of time.

Vanda Borean, owner of **Rackets & Runners**, adds, "For a community to thrive, it's important we all do our part to buy from and support local businesses." Her store has been outfitting tennis, squash and badminton enthusiasts for more than 40 years. Shoe fittings can even be done virtually now, over a Zoom call.

Amanda Echelli, marketing manager for **Global Watch Company**, says "supporting local, especially in our luxury market, helps keep international brands like **Chopard** available in Vancouver. GWC is locally owned and operated." In keeping with the luxe vibe, Chopard Boutique Vancouver GWC offers private shopping appointments.

Many stores, such as **MEC** and **La Maison Simons**, have in-store pickup available, to minimize the time customers need to spend inside. And countless others—including **East India Carpets**, **Diane's Lingerie** and **Nordstrom**—offer curbside pickup. Rackets & Runners has even taken this service to the next level, setting up outdoor heaters to keep shoppers warm and cosy while waiting.

"If shoppers are not comfortable to go in store, most businesses are offering online purchasing and curbside pickup and, of course, take out," says McFadden of retailers along West 4th. "The time is now to support your local neighbourhood and businesses so they make it through this."

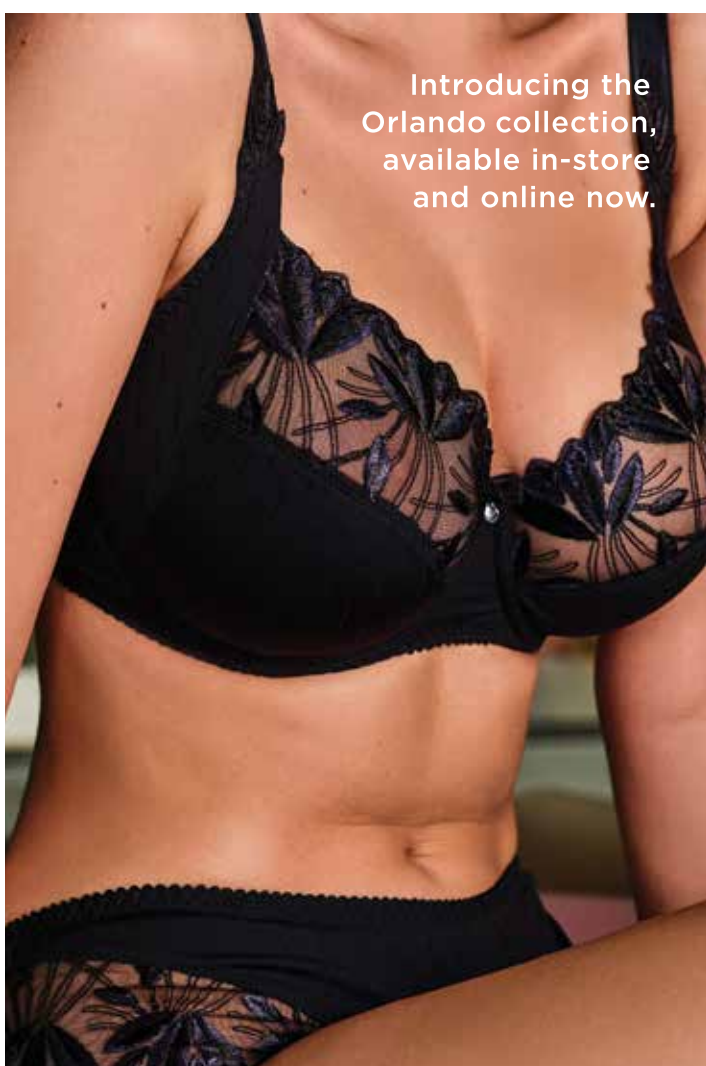
Several stores have dreamed up high-tech methods to deliver the spirit of the season this year. **Native Shoes** is filling its social media feeds with fun holiday content. MEC has curated a Spotify playlist overflowing with holiday cheer—but none of the tired old tunes you might expect. And Santa has gone virtual at Nordstrom, offering personal visits by video and accepting letters by email.

Even though local holiday shopping may look a little different this year, festive fun still abounds—but from a safe distance. **McArthurGlen Designer Outlet Vancouver Airport** is decked out in holiday finery, making it the ideal backdrop for open-air photos (the perfect opportunity to capture a snap for your holiday card). South Granville and Robson Street are ideal for seasonal strolls with regular stops to shop ... and warm up with hot chocolate. West 4th Avenue is adorned with nutcrackers, mistletoe and Santa mailboxes, plus the area is hosting a Kitsmas Advent event complete with 24 days of giveaways.

If you expect to keep visiting your favourite stores—from **Fine Finds** in Yaletown to **La Jolie Madame** downtown—after the pandemic, use your holiday dollars to support them now. Anne Sanfacon, publicity co-ordinator for Simons, sums it up: "Supporting the local economy also means supporting services to local citizens and participating in the collective well-being."

Meantime, on West 4th, along Robson, up and down South Granville and in other shopping districts throughout the city, the motto for the season provides a perfect mantra to keep on repeat as we check names off our holiday shopping lists: Gift Big, Shop Small. It's truly for the good of us all. ♡

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