

# Last-minute lovers

By JoAnne Klimovich Harrop  
TRIBUNE-REVIEW

The clock is ticking.

But trained professionals are ready and waiting to help last-minute Valentine's Day shoppers find a quick way to express their love for that special someone.

Flower shops are stocked with dozens and dozens of roses arranged in vases for a quick grab-and-go. Shelves in candy stores overflow with chocolates, some already tucked inside heart-shaped boxes for easy purchase.

"People waiting until the last minute is how Valentine's Day is every year," says Christian Edwards, co-owner of Edward Marc Chocolatier, with stores on the South Side and in Washington, D.C. "We have been in the chocolate business for about 95 years, so we know people will be coming in (today) and Saturday. We will definitely be ready."

Choose from traditional prepackaged red and pink boxes decorated with bows, or create your own mix.



Candies, tulips and other gifts at Toadflax in Shadyside

JASMINE GOLDBAND/TRIBUNE-REVIEW

Edwards expects this year's holiday to be as sweet as in the past. In a volatile economy, he says, "chocolate is the cheapest anti-depressant you can find."

The old-fashioned heart boxes usually are big sellers, he says, because they are the signature Valentine's Day gift.

Valentine's Day typically is the busiest day of the year at Betsy Ann Chocolates, headquartered in West View. There are busier seasons,

says Jim Paras, president of the candy company, but not many busier single-sales days. He can recall 30 to 40 years of men buying candy for their wives.

"Valentine's Day can be insanity, because it is so last-minute," he says. "But people who come in at the last minute will buy whatever they can get."

Good service is important on Valentine's Day to make sure the customer gets the perfect present, says Bill

Haven't bought that Valentine's Day gift yet? Don't worry, you're not alone

Chisnell, owner of Design-space floral shop in East Liberty. He offers roses in white, cream, hot pink, cherry, yellow and, of course, red. There's a special — two dozen roses for the price of one dozen in a square glass vase.

"We know we will have panicky people in here (today) and Saturday," Chisnell says. "And it most likely will be a nightmare, because some guys may think at the beginning of the week they will just go out to dinner, but then they rethink the idea and say to themselves that they'd better bring something along with them."

Having someone come in on the spur of the moment is nothing new, says Jeff Pierce, co-owner of Toadflax in Shadyside. He's come to expect it.

"We are used to working under pressure," Pierce says. "We actually gear up for it. You can find something you like here, or we will be happy to put something together quickly for you."

## HEART DAY TIDBITS

### Read your way to a wedding

A new book, "The Real Reasons Men Commit: Why He Will or Won't Love, Honor, and Marry You," gives women — as early as the first date — tips on how to spot a man who is interested in marriage.

The book also gives strategies on how to persuade a commitment-phobic guy to take the plunge, including how to subtly influence his decision to commit.

### Batty for V-Day

Sometimes it seems as though men live in a cave when it comes to romance. This Valentine's Day, ladies can take their guys to a real cave.

Lincoln Caverns in Huntingdon in Central Pennsylvania will sponsor its third annual Batfest tomorrow. From 10 a.m. to 3 p.m., visitors can tour the caverns and check out the hibernating bats. Registration is required.

### Put 'em on ice

The North Park and South Park ice rinks will sponsor Sweetheart Skates tomorrow.

Couples can skate for the price of one admission between 7:30 and 10 p.m. Each couple will receive a carnation while supplies last.

Admission: \$5 for skaters between ages 13 and 59; \$3 for senior citizens.

Source: Tribune-Review Research

## With body language, men speak clearly, women mumble

Men who are unlucky in love can take heart this Friday the 13th.

A recent study by researchers at Indiana University has added credence to the assertion that women are nearly impossible to read.

The findings, though, won't help much if you're hoping for love at first sight this Valentine's Day.

"Men need to step back a little bit and give it some time rather than expect immediate results," said Susan Dunhoff, who operates Modern Matchmaker in Squirrel Hill.

Researchers asked college students to observe German-speaking men and women in a speed-dating session and make determinations about their dating interest based only on body language and facial expressions.

The students' predictions about a woman's interest in a man were misunderstood more often than a man's interest in a woman, according to the study. The reason: Some women flirted even when they weren't interested in the guy.

"I just don't think (men) can always trust a woman's body language, because women have a tendency to be softer, and it's very hard for them to say something negative," Dunhoff said. "A client will call me and say 'I like him' or 'I'm not sure,'" she said.

"The worst thing to do is to lead someone on because you don't have the guts to say, 'I'm not interested.'"

The study could help women in the singles scene, lead researcher Skyler Place says. They'll know rather quickly whether a guy's interested and save both of them from an otherwise awkward evening.

The study could be beneficial to men, Place said. The message — trust your

instincts, but slow down.

That's not always easy in a world of speed dating and immediate gratification, said Dr. Paul Friday, chief of clinical psychology at UPMC Shadyside.

Especially this weekend, when not having a date can be a real downer, he said.

"If you are alone," he said, "it highlights the fact that you don't have a mate, and it screams at you with a

capital 'L' on your forehead."

— Jodi Weigand/Tribune-Review

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