

# Shoppers take advantage of statewide tax holiday

**Brittany Bernstein and Annika Hammerschlag**  
Fort Myers News-Press  
USA TODAY NETWORK - FLORIDA

Department stores and shopping malls were buzzing with high-pitched voices Friday as children joined their parents to take advantage of the first day of the back-to-school tax holiday.

As part of the statewide event, school supplies priced at \$15 or less and clothing and footwear \$60 or less will be available to shoppers tax-free through Sunday.

Unlike last year, this year's savings will not be extended to tech items such as computers and printers. Savings opportunities also were limited in 2016 when the holiday was shortened from 10 days to three and the eligibility threshold for tax-free clothing was reduced from \$100 to \$60.

Click here to see a full list of tax-exempt items.

At Miromar Outlets in Estero, parents pushed their little ones in strollers, toy shopping carts and front packs, while older children followed closely behind or clung to their parents' hands.

The mall is hosting a Back-to-School Bash on Saturday featuring special giveaways including four \$500 Miromar Outlets shopping sprees, a fashion show near Kate Spade New York, live entertainment and makeup tutorials. Throughout the holiday, Miromar shoppers can benefit from the tax break as well as store-specific sales and coupons.

"With the tax holiday and the sales, it helps a lot," said Rachel Bohn, who was visiting from Brandon, with her four children to take advantage of the outlet's large selection.

Bohn plans her back-to-school shopping around the tax holiday each year, she said.

Because she hadn't yet received a school supplies list from her children's teachers, Bohn was focused primarily on finding shoes and clothing deals.

Waiting in line to check out at Rack Room Shoes, where certain brands offered buy-one-get-one-half-off deals, Bohn's daughter, Emily, 3, showed off the trendy pink sneakers she picked out for her first day of preschool.

"I like them because they have sparkles and they light up," Emily said.

Stephanie Garcia of Lehigh Acres, who braved the busy Edison Mall in Fort Myers, said she also waits until the tax holiday to do her school shopping for her two daughters each year.

"Every little bit that we save helps right now," Garcia said. "It gets really difficult preparing them and every-



**This year's tax holiday is three short days.**  
LARRY MCCORMACK/THE TENNESSEAN

thing so every little savings — I'm all for it."

Garcia came out with her daughters to buy backpacks, sneakers and clothes with money that she had put aside just for the tax holiday.

Long lines and crowded stores didn't deter Garcia from scoring deals.

"It seems to be really busy out here today... lines have been kind of hectic in several stores, but you know, we're pushing through," she said as she waited for her 8-year-old daughter to try on clothes in Justice.

Justice's store manager Jeanne Hoving said the store has seen many moms coming in looking to take advantage of the tax exemption, as well as the store's sales, which included \$10 jeans and shorts.

"They know (about the tax holiday) and they're waiting for it," Hoving said. "Being a mom myself, I'm not a tax free shopper because I like to get it done but believe me, I understand if you want to save... tax free is the time to do it, especially because that's when the sales come out."

Hoving has been the manager of Justice's Edison Mall location for five years and has worked with the company for nine.

Her advice to shoppers, as a long-time retail worker? Don't wait. If you see something you like, put it on hold or buy it right away. You never know when things might get sold out.

She said the store spent three weeks preparing for the tax holiday, stocking up on merchandise and receipt tape and hiring new employees, but the store will inevitably sell out of things.

"Get here as soon as the stores open because honestly the later you wait in the day, the crazier it gets," Hoving's assistant manager Samantha Faux added.

## News from the North

### IN BRIEF

#### Wind turbine sculpture proposed

NEWTON, Iowa — An Iowa official has proposed converting a wind turbine blade into a sculpture that would be a new landmark for his community.

Bruce Showalter's proposal to use the TPI Composites-made wind turbine blade aims to make Newton more appealing and distinguishable to visitors and passers-by, the Newton Daily News reported.

Showalter is the chairman of the Newton Hometown Pride Committee and housing director of Newton Housing Development Corporation. He proposed the idea to city council members on Monday.

"We want your support and your blessing going forward with this if possible at some point in time," Showalter told the council Monday.

The project aligns with the Newton Future Committee/Newton Hometown Pride Committee's 2017 goals of making Newton more memorable.

Showalter said he found a potential space for the sculpture near Highway 14.

#### 7 medical marijuana licenses issued

COLUMBUS, Ohio — The Ohio Department of Commerce said only seven companies have met the state's minimum standards to process plants into marijuana-infused products for use by people with physician recommendations.

Cleveland.com reported the companies were given provisional licenses Friday. Another six could receive licenses after background checks are completed.

Three of the seven processors also have licenses to grow medical marijuana, although none has been given approval to planting seeds. Only three cultivators have permission at to grow plants to this point.

Legislation approving the sale and use of medical marijuana required that products become available to people with qualifying medical conditions by Sept. 8. State officials have acknowledged that deadline won't be met because of delays in the licensing process.

— Associated Press

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