



POUGHKEEPSIE, N.Y. At the Galleria, kids must be 18 to shop unsupervised on weekend nights

mographic that spent \$158 billion last year. And civil rights groups worry that the policies could have a discriminatory effect.

Indeed, some malls put in the rules only as a last resort. In late 2004, to help manage the 200 to 300 teens coming to the Poughkeepsie mall on a typical Friday night, general manager Joseph Castaldo first tried bumping up his staff of security guards from seven to 10. Then he added off-duty police officers. But problems persisted, and the mall was losing business on weekend nights as adult customers fled, says Castaldo. After the September start of a teen policy on weekend nights, incidents requiring police intervention dropped from three per night to none.

STILL SPENDING

WHEN O'MALLEY started working at Fairlane in 2003, she too was taken aback by the number of teens who lounged around, bothering other customers by blocking entrances, running into strollers, arguing, or cursing. On a typical weekend night as many as 3,000 teens came to Fairlane, which has 165 tenants, including five anchor stores and a 21-screen cinema. "Families and adults after 5 p.m. would disappear once they knew the kids were coming," she says. To win support for a teen policy, O'Malley invited school officials, local civil rights groups, and religious leaders to the mall so they could observe the thousands of loitering kids.

Since Fairlane's policy took effect in June, 2004, the mall has become calmer. Membership in its Kids Club, which organizes activities for children age 12 and under, has tripled, to 9,000, as parents feel more comfortable at the mall. The mall's "walking club," made up of mostly senior citizens, has seen its ranks more than double, to 1,100. And both parents of younger children and seniors tend to spend money at the mall. Before the policy, at times up to 750 teens were expelled a night. That number fell to 200 in all of 2005, and incidents needing police intervention, like fights, fell 70%.

Meanwhile, teens are still spending. And the parents by their side are more likely to buy something for themselves, too. ■

RETAIL

KICK OUT THE KIDS, BRING IN THE SALES

As malls ban unchaperoned teens in the evening, shoppers are returning

BY LOUISE LEE

EVERY AFTERNOON JUST before 5 p.m., the Fairlane Town Center in the middle-class suburb of Dearborn, Mich., broadcasts a pointed message over the PA system. In English, Arabic, and Spanish, the mall tells all unchaperoned teenagers: Please leave.

Bad for business? Hardly. Two years after instituting its adult supervision policy, under which teens age 17 and below need a chaperone after 5, Fairlane has found that shutting out the big-spending teen demographic is good for business. Families and older consumers scared off in the past by throngs of rowdy teens are coming back. Shoplifting is down, and sales inched up 1% in 2005 after remaining flat the previous year. Most notably, sales at youth-oriented stores grew a healthy 3% to 5%. "The teens that come are now here to shop," says Catherine O'Malley, Fairlane's general manager.

er. "All our tenants enjoy the benefits."

The number of malls with adult supervision policies is small but rising. In a 2005 survey of its 1,000 members, the International Council of Shopping Centers found that out of 120 responses, almost a third had teen rules, most of which were instituted in the last two years. In the past year, Pheasant Lane Mall in Nashua, N.H., Town Center at Aurora, Colo., and Poughkeepsie (N.Y.) Galleria have all adopted rules. Even the Mall of America in Bloomington, Minn., the nation's largest, just last fall tightened its decade-old weekend policy so it kicks in at 4 p.m., two hours earlier than before.

Adopting a chaperone policy comes with real risks, such as alienating a de-

To Ban or **Not** to Ban?

More malls are adopting policies that limit the access of teenagers to stores.

PROS

- Attracts a wider range of customers
- Helps reduce shoplifting
- Cuts down on disruptive incidents, like fights

CONS

- Teen-oriented retailers could balk—as could teens
- Personnel must be hired to enforce the policy
- Legal troubles may surface, perhaps in discrimination suits