NNB News : 2012 : 02 : 27 : Street vendors seize economic opportunities

Dorian Ponds

Follow this and additional works at: https://digital.usfsp.edu/nnb_news

Recommended Citation
https://digital.usfsp.edu/nnb_news/17

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Neighborhood News Bureau (USFSP) at Digital USFSP. It has been accepted for inclusion in NNB News by an authorized administrator of Digital USFSP.
Street vendors seize economic opportunities

By Dorian Ponds

Tables with fresh roses, scented oils and baskets of goodies decorated the streets on Valentine’s Day. These sweetheart items were an enticing notice for last minute shoppers to pick up a gift before heading home. Street vendors also took advantage of the holiday to make some extra money.

“Business has been booming,” said Eugenia Craig-Webb, who by noon sold most of the gift items she had on display in the trunk of her car. “Once people get off work, they should be coming back to take the rest of my goods away.”

Craig-Webb, a street vendor on special occasions like Mothers Day since 1990, stocked her car with just enough teddy bears, candy and balloons to meet the high demand that she normally encounters on Valentine’s Day.

Within the same area on 22nd Avenue South, another veteran of the trade sold gift baskets on a table.

“I’ve been doing this all of my life,” Verdell Mondy said. “When I was a younger girl I used to make baskets when I was in junior high. I’ve been doing it gradually since.”

The 54-year-old mother of two says a tough economic time is one reason she decided to put together baskets for Valentine’s Day.

The demand for flowers was equally as high just a few feet away where Kelly Smith and her family were selling roses.

“I was a Budweiser Girl about eight years ago and that’s what got me into this,” Smith said. “We go to all of the festivals and we just decided to do roses. We have 18-year-old twins, a boy and a girl, and my husband and me put them together.”

Her son Hunter Davis, who helps the family sell gifts around Easter and Christmas, talked about the hard work that goes into preparing the flowers on Valentine’s Day.

“We put together the roses for like a week,” Davis said. “We had 1,500. It takes a little while. A lot of hard work; we were working like 24 hours at a time to get them ready.”

Davis says that street vending on holidays is a lucrative business; one that the city will shut down if the vendor does...
not follow the rules.

“You have to have a license to sell out here,” he said. “You have to pay for it and everything. People will be out here on the corner and they won’t have their license and everything, and they’ll be out here trying to sell stuff. The city will come out and shut them down. So basically you have to know what you’re doing.”

Brian Randall and his girlfriend Alicia Ochoa agree with the financial opportunity that selling gifts provides. The couple sold perfume and lotion on the busy day.

“It’s a lucrative business, really,” Randall said. “We’ve had people come and then bring people back. We’re trying to work deals. It’s Valentine’s Day; day for the women.”

Currently living in the area, Randall says he wants to eventually open a business in Midtown.

“I’m going back to school for business; 20 credits away,” he said. “That’s my goal by the end of the year to get that up and running. Most definitely staying in this area; I love this area – St. Pete.”

Like many other street vendors along 22nd Avenue South, he said the money will go toward supporting his family.

Tagged as: eugenia craig-webb, midtown, St. Petersburg, valentines day