

## Business as usual

Owners talk about how their businesses are affected by summertime crowds

By Daniel Chapman  
THE BATTALION

As the temperature rises on Northgate, so do worries about finances for the multiple businesses across the street from Texas A&M. With the vast majority of the student population in places other than College Station, the number of patrons dwindles. For the most part, business continues as usual, but some businesses on Northgate would not survive if not for the influx of students in the fall. The steady demand throughout most of the year makes Northgate a prime spot for a wide scope of services.

With regards to the food industry, Freebirds may have made the most noticeable changes with new summer hours. Now closing at 8 p.m. as opposed to the school-year friendly 10:30 p.m., manager Amanda McCoy deemed the changes necessary.

"We are busy at lunch, because I think that more of the faculty come out since the students are not here," McCoy said. "It is slower at nights. We have been doing a quarter of the business that we would normally do at nights so we decided to close

at 8 p.m. because there is no sense in staying open till 10:30 p.m."

However, the clientele at the other locations is different than that of Northgate.

"The Rock Prairie location has many family patrons, so they are virtually unaffected and the same is pretty much true for the

Inc. owner Robert Rose said he knows from past experience that the summer can be a challenge for business, but that he uses some of the slower time to prepare for his busiest time of the year.

"I really look forward to back-to-school and late August, which is our prime time for sales," Rose said. "We use the summer to make sure that we have all our items in stock that people will need. We sell more than 1,000 items and it is a good time to go through and estimate how much we will need for next year."

While it is natural to assume that with less students there would be less business, some businesses gain a different crowd to fill in some of the gaps. The Dixie Chicken notices that fewer students frequent its establishment during the summer, but it finds that in their absence, there are different people to fill in the gap. Jeremy Sulton, the manager of the Dixie Chicken, said he is unfazed by the summer season.

"Business slows down a whole lot, but we don't really have to do that much to try to balance it out because our profits usually stay pretty

high all summer," Sulton said. "We get a lot of different people at night in the summer. People that don't generally come out to the Chicken sometimes come during the summer possibly because it is less crowded. This summer has been much slower than previous summers."

As far as vintage clothing goes, Northgate does not skimp on quality. Michael Weeks, an employee of Northgate Vintage, said he knows that any business is good.

"We get a lot of business in spurts," Week said. "Summers are a little slower, but not by much. Basically if someone comes by and checks us out, we consider that good business."

It seems as though business on Northgate goes on as usual during the summer. The vast amount of business brought by the students during the regular school year seems to tide the businesses over for the summer. Many permanent College Station residents take advantage of the smaller crowds to enjoy Northgate to the fullest. While every business is bound to feel the strain of dramatically lower sales, no one seems to be leaving



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"Basically if someone comes by and checks us out, we consider that good business."

—Michael Weeks  
employee of Northgate Vintage

Texas Avenue location. Things slow down for us, but not to a degree that things are horrible."

Other businesses in town besides the food industry are affected by the lack of students, but business owners say they make the best of it.

As far as cycling in College Station goes, Cycles,

## College students are obsessed with Harry Potter too

By Linda Shrieves  
KRT CAMPUS

Kimberly Morales has a secret. She loves Harry Potter.

Well, it's not a huge secret, given the Harry Potter key ring that dangles from her backpack as she walks across the campus at Seminole Community College. Or the Harry Potter-related talks she has given in her public-speaking class.

But Morales' open devotion to the fictional teenage wizard may have peaked two years ago, when she and a group of eight friends dressed as their favorite characters from the Harry Potter books and stood in line at an Oviedo theater to see the first showing of Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone.

"I think we were the only college students at the theater," recalls Morales, who dressed as Hermione, the boy wizard's brainy friend. The other moviegoers, primarily kids under 12 and their parents, stared at the assortment of college kids in black robes, capes — and one who'd squeezed into a Harry Potter Halloween costume.

It's not easy being a college student hooked on Harry Potter.

Earlier generations had "Star Trek" and "Star Wars" and even "The Rocky Horror Picture Show" to ritualize. Or they stayed up late in the night discussing "The Lord of the Rings" trilogy, or the science-fiction classic "Dune."

But the Harry Potter series — including the new "Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix," which goes on sale at 12:01 a.m. on June 21 — has been marketed as a children's book. And there's the rub.

"In college, it's like a secret society," says Morales. "No one's willing to admit, 'I'm in love with Harry Potter.'"

On some campuses, there's even an undercurrent of derision aimed at Harry's college groupies. The Potter fans — who sometimes call themselves "Scarheads" in honor of the literary hero's lightning-bolt scar on his forehead — ignore the slights.

"I know some people look down on it because it's children's fiction — or they see it as tacky popular culture because of the way it's been merchandised," says 24-year-old Lauren Long, who recently graduated from the University of Central



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Florida in Orlando. "But the people who are really into it don't care."

Campus to campus, Harry's popularity varies. At UCF, Long regularly spotted students wearing Harry Potter backpacks and carrying Harry Potter notebooks. And at Florida State University in Tallahassee, 19-year-old freshman Morgan Myers of Pensacola finds that students who are readers — "and you'd be surprised by how many aren't" — are generally fans of Harry.

Though the students have aged, their passion for Potter remains true. Indeed, when administrators at the Internet search engine Yahoo! began studying all Internet searches for Harry Potter and

the Order of the Phoenix, the upcoming book, they discovered that 17 percent of the searches were conducted by people ages 18-24.

Yet, for some college students — and many adults — there's a stigma attached to reading a children's book.

To combat that, J.K. Rowling's British publisher has released adult versions of all the Harry Potter books, with different cover illustrations than the children's book. And now Rowling's Canadian publisher, Raincoast Books, plans to publish an adult hardcover version of "Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix." The cover will be dark with plain lettering, the equivalent of

a children's novel in a brown paper wrapper.

"One of the phenomenons of this series is that it does have a crossover audience and that it's as fun and as interesting for adults to read as it is for kids," says Tessa Vanderkop, Raincoast publicity director. "And there are some adults who may be uncomfortable being seen reading a children's book."

Advertising may sell the books to younger fans, but on college campuses, students learn about Harry and his wizarding world by word of mouth.

Morales, for instance, gave her circle of friends an ultimatum: "Read these books or I'll disown you."

That was three years ago. Since then, the 20-year-old Morales has passed her Pottermania to most of her friends.

Soon Raley began passing out copies of her books to her friends. "I said, 'After you're done with book four, you're going to be screaming for book five.'"

And now, with the release of the fifth book, "Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix," Raley and Morales and their friends stood in line with the 12-and-under set at an Oviedo bookstore to get their copies.

Meanwhile, across town, Kristin Alvarado, 24, was busy entertaining 80 pint-sized Harry Potter fans at the downtown Orlando library.

Alvarado, now a graduate student at FSU, discovered the magical world of Hogwarts four years ago, when she received a package from her younger brother. Inside she found the first three books in the planned seven-book series, along with a note: "You've gotta read these."

Alvarado dug in. Though she'd never bothered to pick up a Harry Potter book before, suddenly she couldn't put them down.

"They were so good, it didn't even matter to me that they were kids' books," Alvarado says. "There's so much in there that's universal and the issues that Harry deals with transcend age limits."

So at 12:01 a.m., Alvarado was not bar-hopping, like many college-age friends. She was at the library, checking out copies of the fifth book to kids and helping them try on her own "sorting hat."

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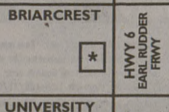
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