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## buyer's edge

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### Bargain Bins: Savvy Atlanta shoppers delight

By [MARYLIN JOHNSON](#) - Atlanta Journal Constitution  
Thursday, May 22, 2003

Susan Henderson jokingly says she is going broke buying bargains.

Like other savvy shoppers, the Dunwoody resident loves to shop discount stores. "Shopping's a game for me -- and it's my therapy," said the president of Atlanta Arrangements, a meeting and event management company.

And now, Henderson won't have to travel as far to shop her favorite retailer -- Filene's Basement -- which officially



**BUCKHEAD:** Katie Blaska of Atlanta finds the new Filene's in Buckhead the perfect place to try on hats. The Boston-based store is Atlanta's newest entry in the upscale discount market, which keeps bargain-hunters looking for famous brands at low prices. (LOUIE FAVORITE/STAFF)

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About "Do Your Giving While You Are Living":

Edie Fraser and Robyn Spizman with these organizations and individuals are on a mission to convince others to support those who are less fortunate with time, dollars or both. They've interviewed top executives to showcase how to make everyone's life better.



When you add up those examples, one arrives at the conclusion there is an outstanding set of leaders for non-profits. Fraser and Spizman believe that reaching out to others is even more important in tough economic times.

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But he added a note of caution. "You have to visit them frequently to find that great value," said Riley. "Because the off-price retailer is buying closeout/end-of-season product from branded manufacturers and full-price retailers, they do not carry a deep inventory in any one item."

"A full-line department store, like Rich's-Macy's, will tend to have deeper inventory of what you are looking for -- a better chance that you can find your size in an item of interest."

Local consumer advocate Robyn Spizman adores bargain shopping, going once a week for at least half an hour.

"You gotta be a believer or you'll never be a shopping achiever," said the author of "The Giftinary: An A-Z Reference Guide for Solving Your Gift-Giving Dilemmas . . . Forever."

For Spizman, not everything's a bargain. "You have to ask yourself, 'do I really need it?' and 'how deep is the discount?'" she said.

"When I celebrate a find, it's usually 75 percent off full retail price."

## SHOPPERS GUIDE

To help you get the most out of discount shopping, here's a guide to some of the best known off-price retailers.

### Burlington Coat Factory

- **In the beginning:** In 1972, Monroe and Henrietta Milstein bought a single coat factory and outlet store in Burlington, N.J. "My wife and I had a different viewpoint from other outlet retailers," said founder Milstein. "Most outlets, at this time, featured the worst styles. We wanted to put our best, hottest styles in the stores. It worked."
- **What the store offers:** Designer women's and men's clothing and accessories; children's wear; shoes; linens and home fashions; baby furniture and accessories. Some labels include: Calvin Klein, Ralph Lauren, Anne Klein.
- **How it works:** Store buyers go to manufacturers and designers before the start of a season, when they have "down time," says Milstein. "We might say to them that we want to buy 10,000 of a particular style but that Burlington needs a better deal."
- **Stores nationwide:** 340, with five in Atlanta.

### Filene's Basement

- **In the beginning:** One of the pioneers in off-price shopping, this store was begun 95 years ago in Boston by Edward A. Filene. The original purpose? To sell off excess merchandise from his family's full-priced department store, at a discount-- in the basement, thus, the name. Other retailers were soon bringing in their unsold goods.
- **What the store offers:** American and European high-end clothing and accessories for women and men; also decorative home goods, fine jewelry, fragrances, gifts and luggage, infants and toddlers. Some labels include: Tahari, Ralph Lauren, Prada, Gucci.
- **How it works:** The store buys manufacturers' current excess stock after department and specialty retail stores' orders are filled.
- **Stores nationwide:** 20 stores, with one in Atlanta opening today

### Loehmann's

- **In the beginning:** In 1921, former department store buyer Frieda Loehmann filled her first store -- located in a Brooklyn automobile showroom -- with racks of clothing. Since she knew many Seventh Avenue designers, Loehmann bought their seasonal overstock at a fraction of the wholesale prices. Legend has it that Loehmann paid in cash, which she kept tucked inside the top of her stockings.
- **What the store offers:** A current mix of first quality designer and bridge clothing labels for women and men, also accessories, fragrances, gifts and intimate apparel. Known for its women's Back Room, which houses such labels as Donna Karan, Calvin Klein, BCBG, Betsey Johnson, Valentino, Dana Buchman, Kors Michael Kors.
- **How it works:** Production overages from designers are bought by a team of buyers who are regularly in the market.
- **Stores nationwide:** 46 stores, one in Atlanta

### Marshalls

- **In the beginning:** In 1956, a group of entrepreneurs, led by Norman Barron and Alfred Marshall, opened the first store in Beverly, Mass. Twenty years later, the chain had 32 stores. In 1995, it was acquired by the TJX Companies, which also owns T.J. Maxx.
- **What the store offers:** One-stop shopping for the entire family with a wide selection of current season, brand name fashions, as well as an extensive family shoe department plus giftware and domestics. The store has larger men's and kid's departments than T.J. Maxx does. Some labels include: Liz Claiborne, Kenar, Josephine Chaus, Jones New York, Raffaella.

- **How it works:** The same merchandise team buys all over the world for both Marshalls and T.J. Maxx, which gives them huge buying power in the marketplace. Buyers obtain merchandise in many ways: closeouts, end-of-season merchandise, canceled orders. They pass on savings to customers. Marshalls and T.J. Maxx usually carry different labels and vendors. If both carry the same vendor, the styles or colors differ from store to store.

- **Stores nationwide:** 639 stores, with 23 in Atlanta

### **Ross Stores: Dress for Less**

- **In the beginning:** The California-based junior department store chain was founded in 1957 by the Ross family in the San Francisco Bay area. In 1982, the chain of six stores was acquired by investors and converted to off-price establishments. The company continues to grow, with 530 stores in 25 states.

- **What the store offers:** Name-brand fashions for men, women and children, also accessories, footwear, luggage and gourmet foods, fine jewelry, fragrances, home accents, bed and bath. Some labels include: Leslie Fay, R&K Originals, Chaps by Ralph Lauren, Tommy Hilfiger.

- **How it works:** The company sells mostly manufacturer's closeouts, which includes overruns and canceled orders. This allows Ross to obtain large discounts that they pass onto customers.

- **Stores nationwide:** 530 with 18 in Atlanta.

### **Syms**

- **In the beginning:** The first store was founded by Sy Syms in 1959 in New York's financial district. By 1978, when Syms' daughter Marcy joined the company, there were six stores and today, there are more than 40. Marcy is president of the company.

- **What the store offers:** A broad range of seasonal merchandise for men, women and children, including shoes and accessories as well as luggage. Some labels include: Hugo Boss, Oleg Cassini, Tommy Hilfiger, Ralph Lauren, DKNY, Dolce & Gabbana.

- **How it works:** Some merchandise is obtained as overruns. Price tags are color coded by size throughout the store, making it easy for customers to shop. Merchandise in ladies dresses is on an automatic markdown system. Initially it is marked 40 percent to 50 percent below nationally advertised prices (just as stock is in the entire store). After each 10 day period, dresses are further reduced by 10 percent.

- **Stores nationwide:** 40 stores with 2 in Atlanta

And, Sandler's worst bargain? "Anytime I buy something for someone else."

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