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### BANNER THIS WEEK



Photo Pru Sowers  
*Todd Dever, co-owner of Forbidden Fruit, said sales at his store fell by half during Family Week.*

## Business owners grouse about Family Week

By Pru Sowers  
Banner Staff

PROVINCETOWN — Family Week, which just ended here, is causing a turf war between

different local businesses: those who benefit from having several hundred children and their parents pushing strollers through town and those who most definitely do not.

And several business owners are up in arms that the Family Week producers have pushed the date of next year's event back to the first week in August, saying the move will further hurt sales at local restaurants, stores, bars and guesthouses.

"That would definitely kill us," said P.J. Layng, owner of Roots for the Home and Garden, 193 Commercial St. "We love the kids but it's hard on a town that only has 10 strong weeks of shoppers all year."

Layng estimated that business at Roots was off 10 percent during Family Week, largely because parents and their children are not interested in shopping for home furnishings on their vacation, choosing more family-oriented fare such as souvenir shopping, whale watching and ice cream purchases. The

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co-owner of another retail store, Forbidden Fruit, which sells upscale gifts and furnishings for the home and garden, said his business was off at least 50 percent from other weeks during the summer season.

"Families with young children don't do the same things on vacation as adults do," said Todd Dever from Forbidden Fruit, 173 Commercial St. "In July and August we are shooting for certain figures each week. Family Week has tracked over my four seasons at half of what it should be."

Dever said he feels a "horrible dilemma" between "doing the right thing" and encouraging families, particularly gay families, to come to Provincetown, and discouraging them because of the negative impact on sales. He suggested moving Family Week to either the week before or week after July 4th, traditionally a slower period that could benefit from an influx of visitors.

However, Jennifer Chrisler, executive director of Family Equality Council, the organizers of Family Week, said many children are still in school the last week in June, and the week after July 4th would conflict with the annual "R" Family Vacation summer cruise, offered to gay families by Rosie O'Donnell's company. Many of the families that come to Family Week also go on the cruise, Chrisler said. In addition, Family Equality Council provides the educational seminars on the "R" Family Vacation cruises and staff are too busy that week to produce two events, she said.

Chrisler pointed out that 315 families with approximately 1,200 family members registered for Family Week this year (reportedly some families come at this time but don't register). The reason the date was moved to the first week in August in 2009 was because that was the traditional week for the event in Provincetown. Of the 13 years Family Week has come to Provincetown, only two of them did not take place during the first week of August.

"We appreciate [local businesses] wanting to maximize their business. But they also have to recognize the value our families bring," Chrisler said. "Our families spend a lot of money on housing, restaurants and stores. They come year after year and more than 30 percent of our families are new each year. Family Week gives a great introduction to Provincetown for a whole new generation."

Still, some business owners say Family Week hits them with a double-edged bat. Not only do the families descend on the town, but adults who normally visit Provincetown on vacation don't come that week, preferring to wait until the crowd becomes less child-saturated. That trend alarmed so many local business owners this year that the Provincetown Business Guild put the conflict on its meeting agenda Tuesday. The result was the gay-oriented marketing group will poll its members on their sales during Family Week in order to gauge the impact.

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“Our members have definitely expressed their ire over the event. The problem with our innkeeper members is guesthouses are not set up to handle families so [families] come and rent condos,” said Tait, himself a guesthouse owner. “And the traditional groups that rent guesthouses don’t come that week either. It certainly is the worst week of the summer for guesthouses.”

Restaurants and bars had a slow week, too. One local restaurateur who asked not to be identified said his sales were down significantly because he was selling \$5.95 kids’ meals. And other businesses, like hair salons, saw their stylists sitting in their chairs waiting for customers.

However, other businesses thrived during the week. Whale watch boats and other water-related businesses saw demand rise significantly. The toy store TippyToe & Trouble, new this year in the Aquarium Mall, had its best week of the season. And a quick survey of Family Week families seemed to indicate they were spending money.

“We do touristy stuff,” said Tom Connell, who was walking with his two daughters down Commercial Street last week. “We did the critter cruise. We went on a whale watch. We eat out and take bike rides.”

“My partner just dropped a couple of thousand dollars on jewelry. My son is wearing \$50 worth of airbrush tattoos. We eat out every meal,” said Lori Monson, from Milton. “We are clearly consumers.”

Candy Collins-Boden, executive director of the Provincetown Chamber of Commerce, said she had heard both positive and negative comments from her members. She said the campgrounds and Beach Point motels were full all week and business at the Pilgrim Monument was great. Hot dog stands, ice cream shops and the Provincetown Trolley also saw an increase in business during Family Week, she said.

“But higher-end retail, guesthouses, art galleries and realtors say Family Week screws up the business and stops the momentum of the summer. I understand both sides. But who’s to dictate what kind of business we’re going to have in Provincetown? Isn’t Provincetown welcoming to all?” Collins-Boden said.

Lisa Bowden, tourism director, said the Family Week organizers don’t receive any funding from the visitor services board so the town has no authority to dictate the dates of the event. However, there may be a conflict next year when Family Week and the Pan-Mass Challenge bike-a-thon occur over the same weekend, putting two large groups of visitors in town at the same time, all wanting a place to stay.

“I understand the challenge of their coming is having an overlap of bookings. But you can’t tell someone when they can and cannot come to town,” she said.

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