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### Partners Card promotion sets mark

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One of Dallas' richest women once told me: "Honey, any fool can pay full price!" That mentality permeates our Big D culture.

Eighteen years ago, Paige Flink, executive director of the Family Place, decided that she could create a dandy fundraiser if she could combine Dallas' world-class shopping with its world-class bargain hunters.

It worked.

This year's just-completed **Partners Card promotion** broke the million-dollar **mark** for the first time.

And that money was raised the hard way. Most of it - \$905,100 - came one \$60 **Partners Card** at a time. The remainder was from sponsors such as Bank of Texas.

"I knew it would happen; I just didn't know when," Flink says of the milestone. "We have such great shopping in Dallas, Texas, and such great shoppers."

The **Partners Card**, in case you haven't heard, is good for 20 percent off at some of the glitziest, trendiest and just downright necessary stores in North Texas.

The more you buy during the 10-day extravaganza, the more you save - or so we tell ourselves.

This year, more than 775 retail stores and restaurants joined in the festivities, including Gucci, Maggiano's, St. Bernard Sports, All Vac and the Container Store.

Every dollar from the sale of 15,085 **cards** went to the Family Place, Dallas' largest family violence agency.

"People were ready and strategic," Flink says. "They planned out what they were going to do to take real advantage of the discount. I have had a lot of positive feedback from the retailers about how much more business they did this year compared to last year. Shoppers seemed ready to spend money."

'Guy factor'

**Partners Card** has become an anticipated event at my household, where even my shopping-averse husband gets into the spending mode.

This year, he bought two pairs of Asics at Luke's Locker in less than 15 minutes. He'd been asking me for a month: "Now when is that shopping thing?"

Sure, he waited for the sale. But he bought an extra pair because of the deal.

The "guy factor" was key to this year's success, says Flink, who instigated the program in 1993 when she got 175 retailers and restaurants to sign on.

"Fine men's shoes just don't go on sale. My husband bought two pairs, not just one," she says. "Men get into the spirit when they see big-ticket items like sound systems, leather furniture and watches."

The **Partners Card** shopping event is always from the last Friday in October through the first Sunday in November. Retailers like the timing because it gives a boost to the pre-holiday lull.

You have to spend \$300 to "pay" for your **card**. Some people fall short, but many others spend much more.

"Hopefully we'll continue to grow in the areas north of LBJ," Flink says. "We're starting to get more volume in places like Southlake, Plano, McKinney and Frisco. Somebody gets a **card** and realizes how cool it is. Then she tells a friend. It's a neighbor-to-neighbor thing."

The official tally for 2010 was \$1,003,080, up from \$898,000 last year.

#### Gem of an idea

Joanne and Charles Teichman, who own Ylang 23 in the Galleria, are longtime supporters of the Family Place. The store is also the leading seller in the U.S. of Cathy Waterman jewelry, which sells for as much as \$140,000 per piece.

For the last eight years, in addition to selling the **cards**, the Teichmans have put on a Waterman trunk show. **Partners Card** customers get 10 percent off designer pieces that never go on sale otherwise, and some people fly in from around the country for the event.

The Teichmans then donate 10 percent of the Waterman sales to the Family Place, the only **Partners Card** retailer to share a portion of actual sales.

"We sold a record number of **cards**, and we had a record Cathy Waterman trunk show" this year, Joanne says. "We cut a big ol' five-figure check to Paige and the Family Place."