



Frazzleberries Country Store sells a high volume of signs focused on family, home and faith.

ALL SIGNS POINT TO Sales

STORY BY CHRISTINE SCHAFFRAN

FROM SILLY TO SENTIMENTAL, PERSONALIZED SIGNS ARE BECOMING POPULAR KEEPSAKES.

If there's one thing a sign is good for, it's making customers laugh. Some might say it soothes the soul. And others might admit the perfect verbiage makes people want to buy the sign.

"People come in and read the signs, and I swear it's like therapy," says Katie Schlichting, owner of Frazzleberries Country Store, which has locations in both Newport, Rhode Island, and Warwick, New York. "They read something and they're like, 'Oh my gosh, that's a really nice saying.' And you can actually see them transforming into a better mood."

Signs come in all shapes and sizes. They can be made from wood, metal, porcelain, fiberboard, ceramic, plastic, aluminum or any other number of materials. They can fit in the palm of one's hand or take up an entire wall. The beauty of signs is in the sentiment, the sarcasm or the simplicity of a message.

"Filling your walls is challenging. From a decorating standpoint, I always tell people you don't want a whole wall of prints in your house," Schlichting notes. "You want to have a mirror or a clock, a sign, a print, and break it up aesthetically. And I feel like that's where people kind of source us for that look. Other times, they just read a sign and they love what it says and want to have it in their home. They want to look at it every day."



CUSTOM CREATIONS

Schlichting adds while both of the shops she owns with her husband, Jerry, carry national vendors, such as Primitives by Kathy and Collins Painting & Design, their bread and butter is in custom signs.

"Having custom signs allows us to differentiate ourselves from some of the other stores," Schlichting points out. "We do all the designing. We have the color swatches and the fonts that the customer can choose from, and then they can really customize the look."

"If they're actually buying a sign for their home, it tends to be more about home, family or faith."

— KATIE SCHLICHTING, FRAZZLEBERRIES

Schlichting says signs for wedding gifts, like "Established in 2023," or for real estate agents congratulating clients on a home purchase have become big business — one she feels Frazzleberries was ahead of the curve on until Etsy and other on-line stores burst into the market about 10 years ago.

Nonetheless, Schlichting says, signs are still booming, with the most popular being faith-based, funny or a simple message about the importance of home or family.

"The funny expressions are nice to have in the store because people read them and they laugh out loud," she says. "But if they're actually buying it for their home, it tends to be more about home, family or faith. That would be our strongest category. In Newport, because it's a coastal town and a beach destination, people like signs about the beach or the ocean. It reminds them of their time here."

If you can find a saying that covers more than one base, it will be a favorite for a while. Schlichting says one of the most popular signs in her shop appeals to more than one type of customer.

"It says, 'In high tide or low tide, I'll be by your side. We do sell a lot of it,'" she says. "It's a cute wedding gift. It's perfect if you're a beach or coastal person. It's just such a cute little expression."

Schlichting says anyone looking to purchase signs should frequent industry trade shows, including Atlanta Market, New York Now and Las Vegas Market since many of the showrooms have signs as part of their mix.

"If people are looking for sources on where to buy signs, I would definitely steer them toward the buying shows," she says.

She also recommends the online buying platform Faire, which allows users to search keywords for particular products.



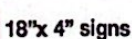
8" x 12" parking signs



12" round signs



23.5"x 5.5" signs



18"x 4" signs



DSPS32S Combo display is designed to hold all sizes of signs, with 8 detachable arms, 4 pockets each, 32 pockets in total!



EMBOSSSED signs
Individually SHRINK WRAPPED
Proudly made in the USA

ALL DESIGNS AVAILABLE
FOR ALL NFL TEAMS

FOR MORE INFORMATION:
visit our website at:
www.signs4fun.com

OR

call us: 602.993.3000

email us: mail@signs4fun.com



A CUT ABOVE

Sincere Surroundings is among the wholesalers that exhibits at trade shows that carry a variety of signs. The Rock Rapids, Iowa-based company takes its products to the next level by offering custom signs — an emerging trend for 2024.

Abbey Grooters, director of marketing at Sincere Surroundings, says personalization of signs and souvenirs became a way for companies to differentiate themselves from competitors. “Pretty much everybody that’s in the sign industry now is doing name drop so what we’ve done to set ourselves apart is to offer complete custom.”

Grooters notes that since the company does not “ZIP-code protect” merchandise, it offers specialized versions of signs, coasters, magnets and candles to satisfy a customer’s desire to have unique items.

“What we offer is total custom, so they could choose any of our substrates and we can design something just for them that’s unique to their store or their community,” Grooters says. “What’s cool about that is it really differentiates their product from everybody else.”



Grooters adds another up-and-coming trend is using more vibrant color schemes that really seem “to resonate well with the buyer.”

“People are looking for more color, especially in the souvenir [category], because you need that eye-catching piece. So we’re adding more color and more graphic elements rather than just words,” she says. “That seems to be doing really well.”

One collection that never seems to go out of style is the coastal collection of turtles, mermaids, manatees and other ocean-dwelling animals, according to Grooters.

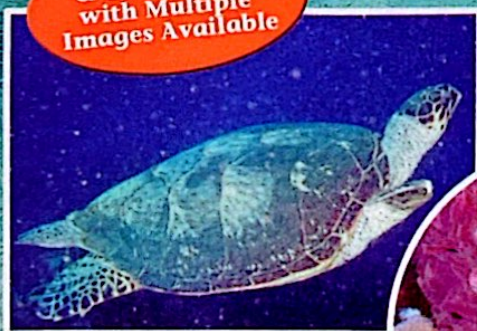
Sayings like “Respect the locals” with images of dolphins and turtles, “The original mermaid is the manatee,” or “Respect the ocean, protect the

For Sincere Surroundings, featuring ocean-dwelling animals on signs never goes out of style.

Exotic Sea Images

Coasters, Magnets, Luggage Tags
Key Rings, Framed Prints, Posters

Name Drops & Customizing with Multiple Images Available



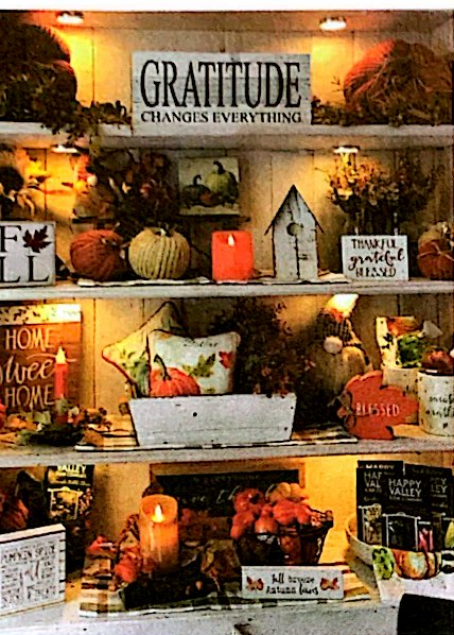
Call or email for free catalog
Phone 703-425-0200
Toll-free 888-857-6576
Fax 703-425-2546

- Great for Gift Shops & Beach Shops!
- Great for Zoos & Aquariums!
- Quick Turnover



6104 Harvester Court, Burke, VA 22015
email: info@exoticseaimages.com

www.exoticseaimages.com



Retailers can include signs in themed displays as a tactic to win customers over.

ocean, love the ocean” are all winners in Sincere Surroundings’ product lines. Add a name drop to it, Grooters notes, and you have a “golden piece.”

“With the souvenir industry, obviously, people are looking for that destination location with a name on it, so they remember that vacation, they remember those moments that brings them back to that nostalgia that they experienced at that place,” Grooters says. “So, really, anything with a name drop; when we’re at a show, everybody’s looking for name drop.”

SIGN STAYING POWER

At the Forest Edge Gift Shoppe in Gaines, Pennsylvania, “The mountains are calling.” The vast majority who stop by the 2,200-square-foot store are on their way to nearby Cherry Springs State Park to camp, says Store Owner Laurie Naugle.

“People are looking for more color, especially in the souvenir category, because you need that eye-catching piece.”

— ABBEY GROOTERS, SINCERE SURROUNDINGS

The rustic gift shop appeals to its carefree RV owners with wood and die-case metal signs adorned with animal sayings and camping slogans like “Happy campers live here” and “Welcome to our cabin.”

Naugle estimates that nearly 10% of sales come from signs, which vary from long and skinny shelf sitters to bear paw prints that spell “cabin” to traditional square and rectangle shapes.

She adds that she loves to sprinkle signs throughout her mix of jams, jellies, baby gifts, knives, camping supplies, home goods, rugs, rustic furniture, apparel, backpacks, handbags and home

decor to convince visitors to slow down and shop for longer.

“The main reason I use signs is to draw people’s attention. Your brain wants to read the words, so it will draw you and hold you in an area longer,” she explains. “So, I don’t just keep signs in one area, they’re everywhere. And it just kind of slows down the pace of people.”

Naugle agrees there’s nothing better than hearing people laugh their way through her shop of signs, which range from \$6.95 to \$39 and include the likes of Primitives by Kathy, metal signs from Ganz and others from Amish Trader and Keystone Wholesale in nearby Lancaster, Pennsylvania.

“You’ll hear people saying, ‘Oh my gosh, did you see the one over here,’” she says. “It slows people down long enough, and people really will stand there and read them all. And then they may look around to other things.”

Naugle says her secret to success with displays is using the rustic wood on the walls made to look like a log cabin as hangers for signs in the shop and then grouping them by theme according to other nearby merchandise.

“Tastefully intermingle them, and just make sure that there’s not so many that they’re going to knock them over if they reach to pick up the shirt that’s there,” she notes.

At Frazzleberries Country Store, Schlichting says grouping by theme is a great tactic to win customers over.

“Cross merchandise signage into a category. If you have a baby section, your baby signage would go in that section. If you have a pet section, your pet signage would go in that section,” she recommends. “Mix products so it’s not just a sign, sign, sign. If it’s meaningful within the display, it seems to resonate more.” SGN