Going green

The challenges and rewards of growing a green business

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- Dining set dilemma
- Interior designer’s tips
- Buyers’ picks
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COVER STORY: PAGE 18

It’s not easy being green

Even so, small businesses find that by going green, not only can they grow but they may be sustainable in more ways than one. BY T. FOSTER JONES

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EVERYONE IS TALKING “GREEN” these days. At Costco, we have long been cutting our energy costs to keep our prices as low as possible. However we have significantly expanded our focus on reducing our carbon footprint. Our Corporate Sustainability and Energy Department has been busy researching how to conduct every aspect of our business in an environmentally and socially responsible and sustainable manner.

We are reducing energy consumption with solar panels on the rooftops of many warehouses and improved lighting, water and cooling systems in our buildings. We have made many changes to our products and are eliminating the use of nonrecyclable and nonbiodegradable packaging materials. New package sizes and shapes enable us to reduce the number or amount of pallets, trucks and fuel it takes to deliver the products to our warehouses. The net result is not just being greener, but improved quality at a lower price for our members.

July is furniture month in our warehouses, with an expanded selection of a variety of pieces. In this issue, you will find many ads for our fine furniture, as well as a special section, beginning on page 39, filled with our buyers’ tips on selecting the right furniture for your home. You can also find a wide selection of furniture on Costco.com all year round, for delivery to your home.

And our summer Passport program continues to offer great savings this month on everything from leather furniture, vanities, flooring, ladders, LCD and DLP HDTVs, telephones, computers, HP all-in-one printers, office chairs, digital photo frames, and Whirlpool Duel washers and dryers to our new cupcakes (perfect for Fourth of July barbecues). Also, watch your mailbox later this month for additional special offers coming soon. Happy Fourth of July from all of us at Costco!
Simon & Schuster delivers with brand-new bestsellers!

ROME 1960
by David Maraniss
From decathlete Rafer Johnson to Louisville boxer Cassius Clay, from the first doping scandal to the first shoe endorsement, the 1960 Rome Olympics saw the birth of a new era, not only in sports, but in the world at large. With tensions in Germany, China and sub-Saharan Africa, and with the civil-rights movement and the Cold War in full swing, the world was on the brink of major change. David Maraniss’ compelling book reveals why the 1960 Rome Olympics truly were “the Olympics that changed the world.”
SIMON & SCHUSTER/HARDCOVER
On sale July 1

THE LAST PATRIOT
by Brad Thor
In this controversial new book from bestselling author Brad Thor, the power to forever change the face of militant Islam lies in the hands of one man. Navy SEAL turned covert Homeland Security operative Scot Harvath thought he had finally escaped his dark and dangerous past, but when a car bomb explodes outside a café in Paris, Harvath is unwillingly pulled into his most challenging mission yet. The death of Dr. Marwan Khalifa, one of the world’s preeminent Koran scholars, is just the beginning of a sinister plot to keep Mohammed’s mysterious final revelation a secret from the rest of the world. Timely and terrifying, The Last Patriot is Brad Thor at his best.
ATRIA/HARDCOVER
On sale July 1

CHASEING DARKNESS
by Robert Crais
The self-proclaimed “world’s greatest detective” is back in bestselling author Robert Crais’ new book, Chasing Darkness. Private detective Elvis Cole goes from hero to suspect when a man Cole helped clear from murder charges is found dead, clutching the victim’s photo in his hands. Will Cole be able to keep his cool now that the tables are turned?
SIMON & SCHUSTER/HARDCOVER
On sale July 1

Bestselling author James Lee Burke leaves the familiar bayous of Louisiana and transports readers to the mountainous wilds of Montana in his thrilling new book, Swan Peak. Detective Dave Robicheaux is fighting his own demons of alcoholism and rage, but that won’t stop him from doing what he does best: solving crimes. Loved by readers and critics alike, it’s no coincidence that Burke has been called “the Faulkner of crime fiction.”
SIMON & SCHUSTER/HARDCOVER
On sale July 8

Purchase James Lee Burke’s Swan Peak and SAVE $2.00 at the register
Valid July 8 to 14, 2008

Products may not be available in all locations. All book jackets are subject to change.
Debate goes on

In response to the June Debate, “Is being neat and organized overrated?”

NO. It’s not about creating such a sterile environment in which you can’t live your life comfortably, it’s about being able to access information or items on demand so that you don’t waste your time or money.

Gwynnae Byrd
Sacramento, California

YES. I operate in organized messiness. The sign above my computer says, “If a cluttered desk signifies a cluttered mind, what does an empty desk signify?”

Sheldon Smith
Scottsdale, Arizona

NO. Order frees your mind so you can be more productive and creative.

Margie Feinberg
Denver, Colorado

Odds and ends

A state of grace

Regarding the financial section “Route to riches” in the June issue, a section titled “Tips for all ages” contains a paragraph titled “Smoothing the Ride.” It mentions moving to a different state [to maximize your standard of living in retirement]. Which states are more retirement friendly? Which states have no state income tax, lower retirement taxes, lower real estate taxes, friendly sales taxes, etc.? Where would I access an up-to-date list that would compare all this information and more?

Susan Gatch
Loveland, Ohio

Credit and credibility

Thank you for Tiffany Bass Bukow’s article in the June 2006 issue titled “The importance of maintaining good credit.” All the consequences of poor credit that Ms. Bukow addressed are valid, but she left out one very important one—that poor credit can also affect your job prospects.

More likely than not these days, companies are running credit checks on job applicants. A lot of jobs involve handling money, and nobody will hire you to manage their hundreds or thousands of dollars in accounts or inventory if you can’t manage your own finances. This is important for everyone, not just 26- to 39-year-olds.

Rebecca Woo
San Francisco, California

Have something to say?

Readers are encouraged to submit letters to our editors on any topic or issue covered in The Connection. Please include your full name and phone number or address. Send all letters to: Dialogue, The Costco Connection, P.O. Box 34088, Seattle, WA 98124-1088; fax to (425) 313-6718; or e-mail to dialegue@costco.com. The editors reserve the right to edit letters for publication.

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Reader’s guide to product availability

- All products advertised are carried at Costco warehouses unless otherwise noted; however, products may not be available in all warehouse locations.
- Products are scheduled to be available during the period of The Connection’s issue date.
- All ads indicate whether a product is available only in the warehouse, only on costco.com or both.
- Prices are usually not listed in the advertising because they have not been finalized at the time of printing and may vary from one part of the country to another due to shipping costs. We hope that members know to check Costco first when comparison shopping.
- To keep prices low, Costco does not offer a telephone service allowing members to call in for prices or product availability.
- Shop early in the month for best selection on seasonal products.
- Costco.com carries few of the products available at the warehouses, but offers 3,500 additional items, including line extensions and supplemental products.

Reader survey

Please take a moment to complete our anonymous member information survey. Just go to costco.com and search “Connection.” Click “Reader Survey” on the welcome page and then select “Survey A” for current subscribers. Upon completion, you will have the option to enter a drawing for a $100 Costco Cash card.
Hamilton Desk and Lateral File

**Features**
- Constructed of poplar solids and cherry veneers with a bronzied cherry, 14-step lacquer finish. Decorative reverse-diamond match veneer top.
- ITM./ART. 278841 Hamilton Desk
  - Center drop-front keyboard drawer with a pencil tray
  - Two utility drawers and a file drawer in each pedestal
  - Middle drawer in each pedestal has removable dividers
  - File drawers are fully extending and equipped to accommodate letter and/or legal hanging files
  - Bottom two drawers in each pedestal lock
  - W 66 in. (167.6 cm) x D 30 in. (76.2 cm) x H 30 in. (76.2 cm)
- ITM./ART. 278834 Hamilton Lateral File
  - Two fully extending and locking file drawers equipped to accommodate letter and/or legal sized hanging files
  - Equipped with an anti-tip device
  - W 36 in. (91.4 cm) x D 21 in. (53.3 cm) x H 30 in. (76.2 cm)

Manhattan Black Room Divider

- Open design creates contemporary room divider
- Constructed of hardwoods and wood veneers
- Attractive black matte finish
- 8 cubbies to showcase books and collectibles
- 75.25 in. W x 18.25 in. D x 40.75 in. H
- ITM./ART. 777120

Villa Toscano Return Desk and Hutch

- Constructed of hardwoods and cherry veneers with durable 11-step hand-applied finish
- Desk includes CPU compartment, cord management and media storage solutions
- Features generous molding designs and antiqued metal hardware
- Hutch provides additional storage for books, CDs/DVDs and mementos
- Hutch features wood shelves and cabinet doors
- Locking file drawer holds letter or legal-size files
- 67 in. W x 74.75 in. D x 79 in. H
- ITM./ART. 257793

Leather Chair and Ottoman

- Genuine leather is hand-rubbed for a truly vintage look
- Individually applied antique brass nailhead trim
- Graceful curved back offers cushioned support
- Square tapered legs in a rich brown finish add transitional flair
- Steel seat spring, wood frame, leather and cushioning materials enhance comfort and durability
- ITM./ART. 221284
Loyalty is beyond price

FAR TOO MANY managers figure the only way to gain staff loyalty is to buy it. Of course money is important, but there is another way to gain employee loyalty that doesn’t cost a thing: employee recognition.

According to studies in employee motivation by Dr. Kenneth Kovach at George Mason University, the second-biggest motivator for employees is employee recognition. (Number one is interesting work.) Employee recognition is relatively cheap, yet it has a tremendously high payoff in terms of morale, reduction in staff turnover and, most important, customer satisfaction. Part of the problem is that it’s hard to find creative ways to recognize employees. Plus, managers tend to make employee recognition a scattering of random events rather than an ongoing process. Fortunately, there is a systematic ongoing process for recognizing employees that goes far beyond an isolated slap on the back: customer service team meeting.

A customer service team meeting is a monthly, 90-minute in-house forum where managers and employees discuss how to enhance the customer experience. Of five elements that are covered in a meeting, one of the most motivating is what I call service legends. At this point in the meeting, managers point out specific incidents where certain employees have provided exceptional service. The employees are asked individually by the manager to share the details of the incident with everyone and why they did what they did. Then the whole group joins in a round of applause for the person.

That’s recognition based on service, not seniority. And the approval doesn’t just come from the employees’ supervisors, but from their peers. Most important, the stories that emerge become your own in-house parables that serve as wonderful learning examples for everyone. In other words, the meeting’s service legends component transforms recognition into part of your ongoing education process that people learn from.

Everyone wants to do well, and be recognized for doing so. You’ll warm the hearts and win the loyalty of your team members when you take the time—and have a process—to recognize actions that merit talking about. It doesn’t cost a thing, and in this marketplace it just may make you the employer of choice. (1)

Avoiding poster scams

EMPLOYERS KNOW that the law requires them to display state and federal labor law posters, but many businesses have lost money to poster scam artists.

Ashley Kaplan, compliance attorney for Poster Guard Compliance Protection, explains how the con works: “A scam artist visits a business posing as a government agent, or mails an official-looking solicitation to a business. Business owners are led to believe that the labor law posters they are displaying are not in compliance with current regulations and are then strong-armed into paying excessive fees for outdated or unnecessary posters.”

Kaplan offers these tips for business owners to know they are dealing with a legitimate provider.

1. When choosing a provider, check with the Better Business Bureau to verify the seller’s quality and service standards.

2. Choose a provider that understands both state and federal laws, employs labor law attorneys to interpret regulatory changes and guarantees unlimited protection from fines.

3. Ask for written assurance that the posters meet exact agency specifications for font size, poster size, color and layout.

4. Be suspicious of misleading poster offers that appear to be from the government.

5. If you are visited by someone posing as a government agent, ask to see credentials.

6. Be sure to report fraudulent incidents to the state attorney general.

To obtain posters or for more information about poster requirements or other compliance assistance matters, contact the U.S. Department of Labor by telephone at 1-888-9-SBREFA [972-7332], by e-mail at contact-osbp@dol.gov or by visiting www.dol.gov/osbp/sbrefa/poster/matrix.htm.

Note: Several of these posters are available at Costco Business Centers and at the Business Center on costco.com. (4)
Savona

100% Italian Leather
Sofa and Love Seat

Protected leather – suitable for active households

Eco-Foam seating – ranked #1 for comfort

European webbing spring system under seat

SOFA: 87 in. L x 37 in. W x 37 in. H - ITM./ART. 278995
(220.9 cm L x 93.9 cm W x 93.9 cm H)

LOVE SEAT: 65 in. L x 37 in. W x 37 in. H - ITM./ART. 278998
(165.1 cm L x 93.9 cm W x 93.9 cm H)

WAREHOUSE ONLY

For a limited time.
When good products go bad

By David Horowitz

A PRODUCT IS declared dangerous. A recall is announced. Owners return the item. Simple, yes?

No! Even this year—with widespread recalls of unsafe items, including dolls, baby cribs, lunchboxes and pet food—companies cite poor compliance and report getting back a very small percentage of the dangerous items that have been sold. “We do a very good job of getting dangerous products off store shelves, but our greater challenge is to get dangerous products out of people’s homes,” says a spokesman for the Consumer Product Safety Commission.

Officials are now struggling to determine whether recall announcements are missing their intended targets. The U.S. House of Representatives recently approved a bill (Consumer Product Safety Commission Modernization Act of 2007, H.R. 4040; www.opencongress.org/bill/110-h4040/show) that would force manufacturers of many children’s products to keep track of who buys them so that customers can be personally notified in case of a recall.

(Note: Costco has a comprehensive system for notifying members about product recalls. If a situation is urgent, members are contacted by phone; if timing is not critical, they are notified by mail. Customer-service call agents are prepared to provide up-to-date information and referrals to suppliers or agencies, as appropriate. And, of course, members are given a full refund on any recalled items purchased at Costco. A current list of product notices can be found at the bottom of the home page—or by calling 1-800-955-2292.—Ed.)

LASIK alternatives

The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) is reissuing warnings about the risks of LASIK (laser-assisted in situ keratomileusis) surgery. Users are being reminded that the popular and highly advertised procedure does come with risks, including vision loss, painful dry eyes, and glare and night-vision problems. Ad campaigns focus on instant cures but rarely show the other side. Overall, the FDA estimates that 5 percent of patients aren’t satisfied with the outcome and may experience side effects that do not reduce or self-correct over time.

With LASIK, doctors peel back a flap in the cornea’s surface and zap the underlying layer to reshape the cornea and ease either nearsightedness or farsightedness. This cut is widely believed to be that procedure’s riskiest step. The newest version, considered safer, makes ultra-thin flaps using a second laser instead of the original disposable blade.

Those considering surgery to correct vision problems may wish to investigate other options, such as LASEK (laser assisted sub-epithelial keratomileusis), PRK, (photorefractive keratectomy), intraocular lens implants, CK (conductive keratoplasty) or corneal rings.

Digital mammograms

The transition from film to digital mammograms is causing an enormous increase in the number of fearful rechecks as women learn that the doctor has seen something on the newer test.

An essential part of tracking for breast cancer is the comparison of past and present mammograms. But comparing the digital and film versions can be difficult. Even though doctors assure their patients that most repeat tests wind up being normal, the increase in breast cancers reported in the population has many women fearing the worst.

During this shift in the technology, radiologists learning the brand-new protocol may be more likely to play it safe by requesting additional X-rays, ultrasound exams and even biopsies. The result? For now, more worry and more expense. And, hopefully, more cancers discovered at an early stage. [4]

David Horowitz is a leading consumer advocate. His “Fight Back!” commentaries are heard daily on the Jones Radio Network. For stations and times, check the radio page at www.fightback.com.

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Do you have a question for David?

Just log on to www.fightback.com and “Ask David.” He will personally respond to your problem if you follow the instructions printed on his Web site. (Costco members receive a rebate off the normal fee.) Questions and answers of the greatest interest to Costco members will be used in this column with the permission of the contributor and will be posted on www.fightback.com.
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Reverse to go forward?

By Suze Orman

I’m 86; my wife is 80. We bring in $1,200 a month in Social Security, have an investment portfolio of $20,000 and a line of credit on which we owe $70,000. The only other debt we have is insurance (life/medical/home/auto). Our home is worth $450,000 to $500,000. Are we a candidate for a reverse mortgage?

—Floyd K., Anacortes, WA

YOU DEFINITELY are a candidate. Anyone over the age of 62 is eligible for a reverse mortgage. The way it would work for you is that the first $70,000 of proceeds from your reverse would have to be used to pay off your home equity line of credit. That could still leave you with plenty of money from the reverse given the value of your home. But there’s another catch: The fees for reverse mortgages can be quite steep: more than 5 percent or so of the loan amount. So you want to be careful making this decision; it’s important to understand what will end up in your pocket after all the fees are paid. You can learn more about how reverse mortgages work at the AARP Web site, www.aarp.org/money/revmort.

I’m 70 and retired. My remaining mortgage is $65,000. Car payment is $285. My house is worth $240,000. Social Security income is $1,024 per month. IRA worth $48,000. Money market and CDs worth $28,000. My accountant suggests a reverse mortgage. What do you think?

—Sheila F., Tucson, AZ

AS ALLURING as a reverse mortgage may look to you, I wonder if it is going to solve anything. You need to remember that even if you get the mortgage paid off, you will still be responsible for property tax on the home, the utilities and the usual repairs and maintenance. I am making an educated guess that after paying off the mortgage the income you would receive from the reverse might not cover all those costs, to say nothing about providing you with extra income for your other living expenses.

Another option might be to sell your home and move into a smaller home or retirement community. The goal is that you would pocket enough money after selling the home (and paying for your new place) to earn some income off it to help make ends meet. One other possibility is to rent out a room or two in your home and create a source of income for yourself and a home for someone else who needs one.

I’m 50 years old. My husband and I own a bar, a janitorial company, and we run and own all the dart leagues in the metro Detroit area. We own a house, which he plans on paying off this year. The problem is that my name is not on the house, checking or savings accounts or the businesses. Is this going to be a problem down the road if he passes away or divorces me?

—Kathy C., Detroit, MI

IT’S NOT JUST a potential problem down the road, it’s a real problem for you right now.

Let me be clear: There are no good reasons for keeping everything in his name. So I want you to start the conversation about adding your name as a co-owner of every asset. I am not painting your hubby as a bad guy. The truth is you have been a willing party to this financial imbalance; you showed no interest, so he just handled everything on his own. So there’s no need to attack or be confrontational. I want you to start explaining that for your sense of financial and emotional security you want to be listed as a co-owner of all your assets. If he’s a stand-up guy he should want to do that for you, and for the marriage.

My husband retired after 37 years with the Teamsters Union. We took $50,000 in outright options, which reduced the pension from $4,200 to $3,850 per month. People are scaring me now by saying that if something were to happen to my husband, I wouldn’t get anything but Social Security. Do you recommend taking a life insurance policy on my husband, or an annuity or something else?

—Mary Lou B., West Haven, CT

IT ALL DEPENDS on the type of payout your husband agreed to. You need to review the document or call up the human resources department and ask for some help to find out if his pension includes a survivor benefit. If it does, you want to know what the actual benefit will be. The best-case scenario is that you, as his survivor, would be eligible for 100 percent of the current pension. More typical is a reduced benefit of, say, 50 percent.

If you do not get a payout on his death, or if it is a reduced payout, then you both need to assess whether you would be in financial straits if your husband were to die before you. If you need more money and your husband is in relatively good health, by all means look into a whole-life insurance policy. I usually do not recommend a whole-life policy, but this is a need you are going to have for your whole life. A whole-life policy is not going to be cheap. But if there is no way to go back and choose a survivor benefit payout on the pension, a life insurance policy may be a good way to protect you.
Do politics have a place at the Olympics?

THE RECENT CALL by some countries to boycott the 2008 Olympics in China again serves notice that the Olympics serve not only as an arena where the best athletes in the world compete, but also as a place where international politics collide.

Those who believe that politics should be kept out of the Olympics remind us that one of the goals of the games is for nations to put their squabbles aside and show respect and tolerance through sport. They add that it’s a disgrace to put a political damper on the Olympic Games, because too many athletes have been training all their lives for these events and too many families have sacrificed.

Others believe the Olympics is a natural venue for nonviolent political protest. The games are used to promote democracy and human rights around the world, so what better place to raise awareness of human-rights infringements and other injustices? What do you think?

Find out more about this topic on the Web:
- http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Politics_in_the_Olympics
- http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/03/24/AR2008032402297.html

YES
from members:

Eileen Moskow
Laguna Beach, CA
The Olympics signify unity throughout nations. If we ignore the atrocities of some, the whole ritual is a farce.

Bobby Gibbons
Louisville, KY
Olympics have always been a political tool as well as a sporting event.

Kathy McCabe
Tinley Park, IL
Injustices in other countries need to be brought to the world’s attention, as they’re not being adequately covered by mainstream media.

NO
from members:

Ambi Kakwi
Malden, MA
Some people want to hijack the games for their own reason. Let people come together and have fun, because that’s what the games are all about.

Jodi Anderson
Hillsboro, OR
Politics don’t belong at the Olympics any more than a sporting event belongs at a world peace conference.

Robert Kirkman
Cibolo, TX
The Olympics are supposed to foster friendly competition and camaraderie between nations.
Alfred E. Senn is professor emeritus of history at the University of Wisconsin and author of the book *Power, Politics and the Olympic Games* (Human Kinetics, 1999).

There is no way that politics can be separated from the Olympic Games or from big-time sports in general.

Sports competition is often surrogate warfare. How many times have you heard announcers gleefully say, “These guys hate each other”? We hear “Let’s settle international disputes on the wrestling mat!” It’s surrogate warfare. And politics come with it naturally.

Consider television’s role. The Olympics are big-time showbiz. Television taught the International Olympic Committee to dream of billions of dollars. The Olympics are perhaps television’s best reality show—viewers object to being fed even virtual reality. Television cameras in effect invite anyone with a cause to seize the moment to deliver a message to the world. The Internet now expands the possibilities of demonstration or protest exponentially.

Countries and cities invest enormous sums in applying to host the games. Once chosen—and this too is a political process—they invest much more. All for business, tourism and prestige. Then critics find opportunities: raised fists in Mexico City, boycotts of Moscow and Los Angeles, demonstrations against Beijing’s torch relay, to name a few examples.

Would the Olympics be less political if the athletes competed as individuals rather than as representatives of their countries? Maybe so, but the vast majority of National Olympic Committees would surely object. The Olympics are a world event, not just an American event, and their popularity rests on national rivalries and national pride. The presence of Latvian, Armenian and Mongolian athletes in the parade of nations constitutes a magic moment for the citizens of those countries. Besides the complications of organizing and financing competition, elimination of national teams would mean much, much smaller television contracts.

The demand to keep politics out of the Olympic Games is one of the most political demands a commentator can make. Politics are a natural part of any endeavor where a great many people care, where there is a great deal of money and where there is great publicity.

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Giannis Loannidis is deputy minister of culture (www.culture.gr) for the government of Greece, with responsibilities for sports.

The ideals that emanate from the Olympic Games are essential to the shaping, ripening and strengthening of the values laid down in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of the United Nations. Greece, as the cradle and guardian of the age-old Olympic tradition, plays an important role in displaying and conveying the Olympic messages.

Noble contest, the idea of fair play, respect for one’s opponent, maximum effort for victory by fair means, the value of participation and exercise of the body, combined with the promotion of peace and brotherhood, are just some of the supreme gifts of the Olympic ideal as it was understood and practiced by the ancient Greeks.

The concept of the Olympic truce derives from the conviction that the Olympic ideals express the desire of humanity for a world based on the principles of justice, humanism, tolerance and the peaceful resolution of differences. It dates back to the ninth century B.C., when the Ekecheiria (truce) was declared, under which all hostilities ceased for the two weeks before, during and the two weeks following the Olympic Games to allow all those participating in the games to travel to and from ancient Olympia in total safety. In modern times delegates from North and South Korea paraded together in the opening ceremony of the Sydney Olympics in 2000, and athletes from Iraq and Afghanistan were present at the Athens 2004 Olympic Games.

Although the Olympics cannot be a cure-all for the ills that scourge the world, history suggests that by reviving and promoting the idea of the Olympic truce period, the ideals of tolerance, equality, fair play and, most of all, peace are further strengthened. Furthermore, the “opening” of a country to the Olympic spirit by holding the games has the power to bring positive changes.

The Olympic ideal is bound with the history of Greece, and its elements characterize us and distinguish us as a nation. We have a duty to nourish the new generation with the authentic values of athletic spirit and with a return to the ideals of sportsmanship as a means to mankind’s moral uplifting. The Olympic values represent a universal philosophy, with a moral dimension of the human at its center.
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¹ Based on the results of the National Disease and Therapeutic Index syndicated report among physicians who recommend a branded glucosamine-chondroitin or glucosamine supplement, March 2008.

* This statement is based on a recent human study, using an objective measure. (Biomarker analysis). Results may vary.

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Costco members add environmental sustainability to their businesses’ bottom line

GREEN. It has become, in the words of Shakespeare’s Hamlet, “the native hue of resolution.”

What was fringe has gone mainstream. Green subjects grace the cover of every major magazine. Stories about environmental issues are daily news fare. We see more “green” products on the shelves. Gasoline-electric hybrid cars are gaining in popularity.

Businesses are also making efforts to reduce their impact on the environment by reducing product packaging, increasing the recycled content of products, pushing suppliers to stop using certain chemicals in products, using more renewable energy and reducing the amount of waste generated.

Costco members across the country have been starting or converting to greener methods of operating their businesses. The challenges, they have found, begin with defining what green means and deciding what their motivation for going green is, and go on to affect every aspect of their business.
What color is your business?

"Everybody throws around the term ‘green’ these days, but no one has a definition for it," says Costco member Harry Lewis, attorney adviser in the Environmental Protection Agency’s (EPA) Office of Pollution Prevention and Toxics. "The concept is fluid: As technology and best practices get more developed, the bar may get raised and standards may change."

"A truly green business ... begins internally. ....Then you really get down to work ... providing solutions to minimize your business’s impact."

—Wendy Radwan, Taxi! Taxi!

Similar to the ongoing quest to define what it means to be “organic,” the current challenge is for everybody—consumers, environmentalists and the government—to agree on criteria and then identify products and services that meet their criteria. Businesses need clarity as to what constitutes a level of green they can strive for and lay claim to, through an established and recognized green certification program.

The responses The Connection received when we began our research reflected this amorphous definition. A broad spectrum of small businesses, ranging from those that had swapped out light bulbs or begun recycling to companies that had made enormous investments in clean technology, all identified themselves as green.

Growing definitions

Progress is being made, however. Some computer manufacturers, including Dell and HP, are participating in an EPA program called the Electronic Product Environmental Assessment Tool, designed to promote greener electronics—electronics that avoid certain materials, have less packaging and are more easily upgraded or recycled.

The Energy Star program (www.energystar.gov), one of the first environmental labeling programs, is gaining more importance as retailers and utility companies offer rebates for products meeting the energy-efficiency guidelines.

The U.S. Green Building Council’s Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design program (www.ussbc.org/LEED) provides a tiered certification system to rate buildings on environmental and energy-efficiency criteria. Another program, GreenSeal (www.greenseal.org), provides a green certification label for a variety of products, including eco-friendly paint, soaps and cleaning products.

There are a host of resources, on the Internet, at workshops and expositions and in published books, that spell out the many steps that people can take in their personal and professional lives, to minimize their negative impact on the Earth.

Although the criteria vary, many cities have established green certification programs. And different groups, from environmental experts to small-business owners, have put together a framework of guidelines on what it takes to go green (see page 23).

"A green business is a business that has been upgraded to address the environmental challenges of our country," says Lucy Blake, chief executive of the Apollo Alliance, a coalition of environmental groups, labor unions and politicians seeking to transform the U.S. economy into one based on renewable energy.

"A business is green if it has adapted its practices for the use of renewable resources and holds itself accountable for the environmental and human-rights impacts of its activities," says Costco member Kevin Skovick of StartUpNation.

"A truly green business starts with the basics," says Costco member Wendy Radwan, client and public relations director for Taxi! Taxi! (www.santamonicataxi.com), a Los Angeles County taxi service that developed the area’s first hybrid taxi fleet. “First you begin internally—recycling, using environmentally friendly materials, etc. Then you really get down to work, by providing solutions to minimize your business’s impact and to improve sustainability.”

Why go green?

While there may not yet be an overall definition of “green,” there is enough information available for the hundreds of businesses, large and small, that are making significant changes to how they operate, both internally and externally.

Their reasons for taking these steps are varied. Some fear global warming. Some see green as a market trend. Others believe there are benefits to the planet and future generations. And many businesses are turning to a cleaner way of working because they’ve found it helps them save money—through green efficiencies that allow them to do more while using less—or make money.

“For us it wasn’t a one-issue decision,” say
It’s not easy being green

business is different; members are struggling to find myriad ways to manage food waste, garbage, gas emissions involved in long-distance transportation of food, recycling and water conservation.

Costco member Dennis Brooks, owner of Thai Sapa in Springdale, Utah, agrees, “To source organic foods such as beef, non-GMO [genetically modified organism] tofu, farmers market and homegrown veggies hasn’t been easy, and we pay dearly for non-hydrogenated fry oils as well. Recycled garbage bags, menus, dinner napkins are also more expensive, as are the wind-energy blocks of power we buy to supplement the coal-fire electricity. Where we live we even have to pay for our weekly recycle pickup, not to mention the extra labor involved for sorting and handling it.”

In the housing and development industry there is little oversight, and factors other than cost, such as building codes, come into play. “The ‘not easy’ part also comes in making decisions for everybody. We started thinking, ‘What are we doing about the problem?’”

“It was a confluence of things,” says Costco member Mike Ellis, president of EA Logistics (www.ealogistics.com), a freight company in Bensenville, Illinois, that switched to biofuels, instituted a “no-idling” policy for their trucks and purchases carbon credits through Carbonfund.org (www.carbonfund.org). “You can’t get away from the realities of global warming and the potential implications for everybody. We started thinking, ‘What are we doing about the problem?”

In a recent Retail Systems Research (RSR) survey, 44 percent of retailers said that green practices are a strategic initiative in their company. The survey found that motivations behind green initiatives are strongly related to retail performance: 67 percent of better-performing retailers cited ethical obligations behind their green initiatives, while 76 percent of lagging retailers cited only cost concerns.

“We thought that retailers would be in it only for the potential cost savings,” says Costco member Steve Rowen, partner at RSR, a research company run by retailers for the retail industry. “It turns out that better-performing retailers see this as both a cost initiative and a brand-building opportunity. They believe consumers’ desire for green options is not just a fad and are investing now to transform themselves into green brands.”

Green is gold

Despite the costs and challenges, everyone interviewed for this article has cited the overwhelming rewards—from warm and fuzzy “we’re doing the right thing” feelings to hard, bottom-line statistics that prove their green investments have paid off.

“We probably spend 5 percent more than we have to on these various green measures, but these additional activities and expenditures are brought back to us in the perception of quality and enthusiasm they elicit in our increased customer base,” says Brooks.

“We have saved more than $77,000 in fuel costs in the past year,” says Radwan. “We have been singled out by new customers based on the fact that we’re green. And here we are, a taxi business, and we just won two Sustainable Quality awards from the city of Santa Monica!”

“The press aspect has been phenomenal,” says Bryan Kelley of Groove House Records, who switched to 100 percent recycled packaging for its CDs and DVDs. “Many clients are accessing this stock. Michael Brook [composer of the soundtrack for An Inconvenient Truth] used us. We’re doing about 10 percent more volume.”

“The costs of what we are doing are minimal and the returns, in terms of employee morale, industry recognition and so forth, have already paid us back,” says Ellis. “We’ve picked up accounts specifically because of our point of difference, and it’s already contributing to growth of our bottom line.

“It’s not about politics or ideology; it’s about smart business and being part of the solution,” he continues. “We prove you can do both and make a healthy profit. This is what the business world needs to hear.”

A sustainable hue

The promise of the green economy and the clean-tech revolution is that not only will they help to preserve and protect the planet, but they will also bring a new wave of business opportunities at every point on the economic spectrum.

“It’s not easy being green, but it’s much easier today than it was 16 years ago,” says the Reslocks. “The products available today are tremendously more efficient, user-friendly, multifunctional and cost less than one-third of what they did when we started.”

“Green is just the launching pad,” says Radwan. “The finish line is sustainability.”

“When you add up the millions of small changes that the business community can deliver, you can only imagine the positive impact on the world,” says Ellis.

And that means more green for everybody.
How green do you want to be?
To help you decide what shade you want to be, ask yourself these 10 questions.

- What are my reasons for becoming green?
- Are there any market factors involved?
- How does being green integrate with my business plan?
- How does being green give me a competitive edge?
- Am I starting a new green business or am I running an existing business that wants to slowly move toward being green?
- Do I want to be 100 percent green or are there areas in which I will not be green?
- In any area where I cannot go green, how can I offset my consumption?
- Do I want to have my business certified as being green?
- Are there any green groups in my area, or should I start one?
- When choosing to purchase products and services, how do I qualify them as green?

Information courtesy of StartUpNation (www.startupnation.com)

Becoming a certified green business can involve:

- Complying with all environmental regulations
- Preventing pollution
- Conserving energy, water and other natural resources
- Reducing waste
- Controlling chemicals and hazardous materials
- Tracking resource use
- Educating employees and customers
- Introducing green practices to other businesses

Glossary

**CARBON CREDIT**: The process of reducing carbon emissions by “offsetting.” An example is taking a flight and in compensation paying a company to plant trees to balance the carbon use.

**CARBON FOOTPRINT**: A measure of one’s impact on the environment in terms of the amount of greenhouse gases produced, measured in units of carbon dioxide.

**GREEN**: Having positive environmental attributes or objectives.

**GREEN PRODUCT**: Biodegradable or compostable; made from renewable resources; organically grown.

**SUSTAINABILITY**: Practices that help to ensure the continued viability of a product or practice well into the future.

Books:

Go Green, Live Rich: 50 Simple Ways to Save the Earth (and Get Rich Trying), by David Bach and Hillary Rosner (Broadway Press, 2008)

Green to Gold: How Smart Companies Use Environmental Strategy to Innovate, Create Value, and Build Competitive Advantage, by Daniel C. Esty and Andrew S. Winston (Yale University Press, 2006)

Stirring It Up: How to Make Money and Save the Planet, by Gary Hirshberg (Hyperion, 2008)

Web sites:

www.ghplp.com
www.carbonfund.org
www.climatebiz.com
www.coopamerica.org
www.epa.gov
www.greenbiz.ca.gov
www.greenbiz.com
www.greenbusinesstaskforce.com
www.greenproductlist.com
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www.usgreencommerce.org

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Rather than run their boiler on natural gas or oil, Grays Harbor Paper (www.ghplp.com), a Costco supplier, converted to biomass (wood waste that otherwise would be slash-burned or taken to landfill). Instead of buying electricity, they bought two turbine generators to make their own. Earlier this year they added a third with the goal of not only making their own energy but selling it, too. When the state of Washington approached the company about making post-consumer recycled paper, Grays Harbor developed their flagship product, a 100 percent post-consumer paper, of the same quality as virgin paper, called Harbor 100.

Calculate your footprint:
http://event.nationalgeographic.com/greendex/calculator.html
Green makes sense at Costco

BY TIM TALEVICH

YOU PROBABLY don’t notice it, but on a typical midday in a Costco warehouse very few ceiling lights are on. The buildings are designed with enough skylights to light the interior, and light-sensitive controls automatically turn off the overheads when the sky provides enough brightness.

Called “daylight harvesting,” the system is a simple yet important example of the many steps taken in the warehouses to lessen their impact on the environment. Other efforts are designed to reduce the amount of waste generated by the warehouses, recycle everything from cardboard to chicken grease and use smarter packaging to decrease truck delivery trips.

These are all environmentally smart programs, but in truth they have been employed at Costco for years as measures to reduce operating costs. In other words, at Costco the concept of green applies to the environment—and to money.

“We have been doing these things because they were efficient and bring cost reductions,” says Karen Raines, Costco’s director of corporate sustainability. “And now we’re finding out they’re also green.”

What’s new is that Costco is aggressively pursuing more ways of reducing the warehouses’ impact on the environment. Here’s a look at the highlights.

Energy savings: a top priority

Operating nearly 400 warehouses in the United States requires a tremendous amount of energy—1.9 billion kilowatts last year, to be exact. Several programs reduce energy requirements in the warehouses.

The most visible is solar panels on warehouse roofs. Costco installed the first panels in 2006; today, more than a dozen warehouses in Hawaii and California have them and more are being added every year. These systems can reduce overall electricity requirements by about 20 percent.

“We’re doing this primarily because it’s the right thing to do, but also because it makes financial sense,” says Craig Peal, a Costco assistant vice president who oversees energy-saving initiatives.

All new refrigeration, air-conditioning and lighting systems in the buildings are high-efficiency units that minimize energy usage. Older buildings are being upgraded with more efficient equipment. A recent tune-up of lighting and air-conditioning control systems in 350 warehouses reduced energy consumption by about 5 percent, says Craig.

The warehouses are also finding they can significantly reduce water consumption by using new fixtures. For example, the Costco in Grandview, British Columbia, recently installed low-flow spray valves in sinks throughout the warehouse. It was found that the new nozzles use about 48 percent less water than standard valves. Now, new building specs include these water-saving valves.

Reducing waste in the buildings

Each Costco warehouse generates tons of waste each week, in the form of cardboard, plastic, unusable produce and more. Much of it is kept out of local landfills through a variety of efforts.

All cardboard and plastic wrap is baled in the warehouses and recycled. This year, that will total some 240,000 tons of material. Recyclable paper and plastic are both sold as commodities, so keeping them out of landfills makes smart business sense, says Todd Fitzgerald, Costco corporate recycling and waste-reduction specialist.

Another big source of waste is produce—as much as 1.5 tons a week per warehouse. Costco is testing programs in several buildings to keep this produce out of landfills by paying composting companies to pick it up, for a rate lower than what garbage companies charge. For example, in Palm Springs, California, two warehouses are sending the waste produce to a worm farm, where it is composted into mulch.

The trimmings from meat and grease from Costco’s rotisserie chickens are also reusable. These wastes have traditionally gone to rendering companies, which make them into animal feed and other products. But now, biofuel producers in some regions have started buying the meat trimmings and chicken grease.

Smart advances in packaging

Costco is examining virtually every product in the warehouses with this question: Can the packaging be smarter?

The answer is often yes. For example, buyers are working with suppliers to replace the clamshell packages, which hold everything from cosmetics to calculators, with packages that use paperboard and PET plastic. The clamshell packages have PVC plastic, which isn’t readily recyclable, while paperboard and PET plastic are.

In many cases, products and their packages can be designed to be greener. For example, by making square plastic milk bottles, 224 gallon-size bottles can now fit on a pallet, compared to 210 round bottles. It doesn’t sound like a lot, but spread out to all warehouses, the larger pallet count saves 521 truck trips to the warehouses per year, eliminating fuel usage and exhaust emissions. The same approach is being applied to dozens of products, from laundry detergent to nuts.

Costco is committed to shrinking its carbon footprint in real, sustainable ways, tapping the same innovative spirit that has helped the company be successful, says Karen.

“We’re doing what we’ve always done, by trying to be efficient and cost-effective on things,” she says. “But we’re also looking at where we can do a better job.”

The Costco Connection JULY 2008
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†These statements have not been evaluated by the Food and Drug Administration. This product is not intended to diagnose, treat, cure or prevent any disease.

WAREHOUSE/COSTCO.COM
THERE ARE MANY routes to the Olympics. For some Costco members, the path involves carrying the banner of the USA as one of the dominant athletes in their sport. Others participate in supporting roles that may receive less attention, but are no less important, as coaches, physicians, trainers and more. For the next few issues, leading up to the August 2008 Olympics in Beijing, The Connection would like to share the stories of Costco members who are on the road to gold.

Sync or swim
KATE HOOVEN looks like the quintessential California beach girl: 23 years old, blonde and beautiful. Her interests lie far beyond sun, surf and sand—she’s determined to win a gold medal at the Beijing Olympics as a co-captain of the 2008 USA Women’s Synchronized Swimming Team.

Hooven’s passion for the sport began in 1996, at age 11, when she took a recreational class at her local aquatic center in Walnut Creek, California. That passion gained added inspiration when the team event made its debut in medal competition at the Summer Olympics in Atlanta and the U.S. women took home the gold.

Even at that early age, Hooven was committed enough to devote two to three hours a day, five days a week, in training. “As you get older, the hours gradually get longer,” Hooven explains. With Beijing looming, she is (literally) submerged in the discipline, usually training from 8 a.m. to 3 or 4 p.m. She reports, “Today, we were in the pool from 8 to 2 and then I went running for an hour.” That’s six days a week. On Sunday they rest.

Admits Hooven, “Whatever energy I have left, I try to let loose and have fun with my friends.”

She also proves a passionate advocate for the sport. “A lot of people think synchro is not hard or a sport at all. It’s very difficult to lift someone when you have nothing really to push off of. I encourage people to get in the water and actually try. Really try it. It’s harder than you think.”—Steve Fisher

From Russia with love
UNABLE TO AFFORD a babysitter during their early years in the United States, Valeri and Anna Liukin, recent émigrés from Moscow, Russia, were forced to bring their daughter, Anastasia (Nastia) to the gym while they worked. The two gymnastics coaches, both of whom had earned world and/or Olympic championships earlier in their careers, soon found it impossible to ignore their young daughter’s talent and her desire to be involved. “I was always running around and on the bars, and that’s kind of how I started,” Nastia Liukin remembers. “It became like a huge playground for me.” By the time she was 12, Nastia was an elite gymnast, at 16 she was nominated for the World Top 10 Athletes Award and now, at 19, she is one of the most decorated American gymnasts in world championship history.

She was lucky, says the Costco member, in that “I fell in love with the sport at an early age. Knowing how much my parents have accomplished has really inspired me to achieve.”—T. Foster Jones

Different strokes
COSTCO MEMBER Dara Torres first starting thinking about competing in the Olympics when she was 13 years old. She’s had a lot of time to think about it.

The 41-year-old, who swam in her first competitive race at the age of 14, has competed in four Olympics (1984, 1988, 1992 and 2000) and is preparing for her fifth, which would make her the first female swimmer to make five Olympic teams and the oldest female Olympic swimmer ever. She has won nine medals, four of them gold, and in 1994 became the first female athlete to appear beside supermodels in a Sports Illustrated swimsuit issue.

Has all of this gone to her head? Says Torres, “I think the fact that I’m as old as a lot of my competitors’ parents” helps to keep things in perspective. —TFJ
“I CANNOT LIVE WITHOUT BOOKS.”
—THOMAS JEFFERSON

Enrich your mind this summer with one of these literary classics, including Laura Moriarty’s The Rest of Her Life and Annie Dillard’s The Maytrees.

Hyperion/Paperback
Available early July

Strong heroines and compelling stories will capture your heart in these wonderful summer reads, such as It Had to Be You by Susan Elizabeth Phillips and Full of Grace by Dorothea Benton Frank.

Avon/Paperback
Available early July

With interest rates soaring, tax increases on the horizon and jobs being outsourced to foreign countries, it’s no wonder that Americans feel like they’re being scammed. In Fleeced, Dick Morris and Eileen McGann, political consultants and contributors to the New York Post and FoxNews.com, use their insider knowledge and insight to help explain what’s wrong with America today, and what we can do to fix it.

Harper/Hardcover
On sale now

Fleeched by Dick Morris & Eileen McGann

War and peace! Two men on opposite sides of the world find themselves in a race against time when a link to the ancient Greek oracle at Delphi and a sinister bioengineering plot is discovered. Bestselling author James Rollins once again weaves history and adventure brilliantly in The Last Oracle.

William Morrow/Hardcover
On sale now

DEATH ANGEL
by Linda Howard

Drea was a ruthless manipulator in her first life, but after being shot and killed by an assassin working for her lover, Drea comes back a changed woman—virtuous, protective and set on bringing down the bad guys. Together with the FBI and the help of a mysterious stranger, Drea will prove that there is such a thing as life after death.

Ballantine Books/Hardcover
On sale July 1

SECRET SERVANT
by Daniel Silva

His methods may be a bit unorthodox, but with the whole world in danger, it’s a good thing Israeli intelligence agent Gabriel Allon is on the job! Islamic terrorists are threatening the Netherlands, and the daughter of the U.S. ambassador in London has just been kidnapped. Silva’s seventh novel featuring Gabriel and his stalwart team, Secret Servant, is nail-biting spy fiction at its best.

Signet/Paperback
Available now

PLAYING FOR PIZZA
by John Grisham

Third-string quarterback Rick Dockery has become a laughingstock overnight. After playing arguably one of the worst games in NFL history, Rick finds himself without a team and desperate for a new job. His agent finally comes through with a unique opportunity: to play for the Mighty Panthers... of Parma, Italy!

Dell/Paperback
On sale July 22

NORA ROBERTS

A Renaissance art expert is called to Italy to verify the authenticity of a statue and ends up getting a little unexpected help from a sexy art thief in Homeport. And in Montana Sky, three very different sisters must learn to live together on their father’s ranch if they want to inherit his fortune. Nora Roberts employs her winning combination of romance, humor and suspense in these great novels.

Berkley Trade/Paperback
Available early July

WAREHOUSE ONLY
No place like Rome

1960 Olympics defined a generation

By J. Rentilly

THERE IS ALWAYS A STORY within the story, at least for great journalists. This begins to explain how researching his critically acclaimed biography of baseball great Roberto Clemente led Pulitzer Prize–nominated Washington Post veteran David Maraniss to pen his most ambitious book yet, Rome 1960, a sweeping but deeply intimate work chronicling one of the Olympic Games’ most influential and resonant meetings.

Poring over old sports clippings, Maraniss repeatedly encountered effusive mentions of noted Olympians such as Wilma Rudolph, Rafer Johnson, Abebe Bikila and Cassius Clay (later known as Muhammad Ali), and quickly realized he simply had to know more. He became, in his own words, “obsessed” with the 1960 Olympic Games.

“I have to be obsessed with the subject, and see the right convergence of themes with the arc of the narrative,” the 58-year-old Maraniss says. “The 1960 Olympics drew me in because I saw the opportunity to weave politics, sports, sociology and culture—all subjects that I love—into a single narrative. I saw the full dimensions of life being played out in those games.”

Maraniss admits that other Olympic events—such as 1936’s collision of Nazism and racial-barrier-busting Jesse Owens, 1968’s black power movement or 1972’s Munich tragedy—may be, at first blush, more sensational, but he was nonetheless drawn to the comparatively safe, if no more sane, games of 1960.

“I saw in Rome a way to write about the stirring of the modern world in so many respects: the rise of blacks and women, the birth of modern Africa, the first televised Olympics, the first doping scandal, the heat of the Cold War and tensions in Germany and China, inevitable political tensions, the coming of the end of the old-boy definitions of amateurism,” Maraniss says. “The issues of those Olympics seemed to transcend the moment and tell us more about why we are at the place we are at today.”

And so Maraniss set to work on the book, which was three years in the making, scouring the globe—“many thousands of miles,” he says—for countless exclusive interviews, research and reconnaissance.

“By the time I started writing, I had 80 three-ring binders of documents and another 10 big brown files of other documents and interviews,” he tells The Connection. He spent a month organizing the material into “a master chronology,” another month “sorting out themes and structure” and about nine months writing the book, though he says he “kept reporting throughout the writing process as I would see holes to fill.”

The resulting tome is epic and intimate, brimming with political intrigue and acts of unlikely athletic derring-do. It’s a grand adventure story, a stirring political commentary and a miraculous work of cultural anthropology. “David has a grasp of history and sweep,” says Post colleague Anne Hull, a national correspondent. “He understands how to set an event in the right context. When he first started reporting the Rome book, it was clear it wouldn’t simply be a book about the Olympics, but a larger story about the world and America at that moment. He is a mixture of discipline and poetry, and this book fully reflects that.”

As hundreds of millions of television viewers around the globe look forward to this summer’s Olympic Games in China, Maraniss holds modest expectations for the event. “The Olympics are absolutely not what they used to be,” he says. “There is now too much of everything: too much money, too much TV exposure, too much access to drugs and other forms of cheating, too much of a separation between the athletes of that caliber and the rest of the society.”

But he hopes readers will enjoy the “relative innocence” of the 1960 Olympic Games through reading his book. “I hope readers will feel like they were there, that they feel they know the characters and the world of that moment,” he says, “and that that understanding gives them a better appreciation of why things happened and how, and to see the connections between the past and the present.”

J. Rentilly is a Los Angeles–based journalist who writes for a variety of publications.

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**The Costco Connection**

Rome 1960, by David Maraniss, is available in most Costco locations.
KILLER VIEW
by Ridley Pearson
Sun Valley sheriff Walt Fleming doesn’t hesitate when a skier goes missing, despite the treacherous conditions. But when a team member is shot and killed and his best friend, Mark Aker, disappears, Walt finds himself torn between professional responsibility and the desperate need to find his friend. Bestselling author Ridley Pearson will leave readers cold with the chilling *Killer View*.

PUTNAM ADULT/HARDCOVER
On sale July 15

MOSCOW RULES
by Daniel Silva
Israeli intelligence agent Gabriel Allon may have thought he knew what to expect when he headed to Moscow on assignment, but this is the new Moscow, and the rules have changed. Lurking behind the city’s wealthy exterior, a new generation of Stalinists is plotting against its old enemy, the United States, and a former KGB colonel is about to hand a lethal weapon over to al-Qaeda terrorists. With so many enemies, America is lucky to have a friend in Gabriel Allon.

PUTNAM ADULT/HARDCOVER
On sale July 22

THE DANGEROUS DAYS OF DANIEL X
by James Patterson
Daniel is no ordinary man. His unique gifts have given him the power to catch the killer who murdered his parents in front of his eyes. But Daniel is also the Alien Hunter, and he can’t let a personal vendetta stand in the way of his ultimate responsibility: to protect the world.

LITTLE, BROWN AND COMPANY/HARDCOVER
On sale July 21

DEAR JOHN
by Nicholas Sparks
A soldier and a student stay connected through letters in this heartbreaking love story centered on September 11.

GRAND CENTRAL PUBLISHING/PAPERBACK
Available early July

THE WHEEL OF DARKNESS
by Douglas Preston and Lincoln Child
FBI Special Agent Aloysius Pendergast and his ward, Constance Greene, exchange the peace of a Tibetan monastery for a dangerous quest for a sacred relic.

VISION/PAPERBACK
Available early July

GENERATION KILL
by Evan Wright
*Generation Kill* is author Evan Wright’s intimate portrait of a platoon of 1st Reconnaissance Battalion Marines, the leading unit of the American-led invasion force in Iraq. Honest, insightful, and at times tragic, Wright’s book is a firsthand look into the hearts and minds of America’s troops and the beginning stages of the Iraq war.

BERKLEY TRADE/PAPERBACK
Available mid-July

Costco has ...

Discover...

... the hottest NEW FICTION!

WAREHOUSE ONLY
Jennifer Haigh’s newest novel explores family dynamics from all angles

By Judi Ketteler

JENNIFER HAIGH HAS long dreamed of having the power of invisibility. “I’d love to be able to see how people behave when they think no one is looking,” says Haigh, 39, a Boston-area writer who has penned three novels and numerous short stories. But that invisibility cloak just never came along, so she decided to invent her own worlds, populated with characters she could peer in on undetected.

Her latest novel, The Condition, begins with a snapshot of Paulette and Frank McKotch and their three children, Billy, Gwen and Scott, in the summer of 1976. It then fast-forwards more than 20 years, dropping the reader into the middle of complex dramas unfolding in each of their lives. No one character dominates the action or gets all the sympathy (or blame): Readers spend pages and pages in each character’s head, observing events from various viewpoints.

The structure of The Condition—long chapters devoted to each character—allows readers to get to know the family from all angles. “In good fiction, there are no villains,” Haigh says. “It’s the magic of point of view: You really start to understand why each character behaves the way they do.”

This isn’t the first time Haigh has tackled family dynamics in novel form. Her last novel, Baker Towers, traced a family in a Pennsylvania mining town through the post–World War II years. Even though Haigh, a Pennsylvania native, comes from a small family herself, she finds abundant material to draw from in her interactions with others—especially the way it’s possible to glean new insight into someone after meeting his or her family. “Maybe I will always write about families because I’m so fascinated by them. I’ve never across a boring family,” she says.

No single thing inspired Haigh to write The Condition; instead, the novel represents the coming together of many tidbits of ideas. As a novelist, Haigh says, “it takes some time before you realize they all can live in the same story.”

First, there is Turner syndrome, an actual genetic condition that the middle child, Gwen, suffers from. Because of a classmate, Haigh had long been aware of Turner syndrome, which prevents a girl from physically maturing into a woman.

Gwen matures intellectually (in fact, she is quite bright), but is left with the body and voice of a prepubescent girl. “In our culture, women are their bodies, and I wanted to explore what the world thinks of a woman like Gwen,” Haigh says. Even Gwen’s own family doesn’t know what to make of her. She’s perhaps the most interesting character and the most difficult character to get to know, and when she falls in love it throws everyone (including Gwen herself) for a loop.

The novel isn’t just about Gwen’s condition, Haigh says. “Every member of the McKotch family sees themselves as having some sort of condition,” she notes. Haigh wanted to explore this theme because this is a time when so much of what makes people individuals is medicalized. Personality traits become symptoms, and individuals need a diagnosis to understand why they are the way they are. Each family member’s respective “condition” (whether real or imagined) governs how they behave toward each other, and how they understand each other.

Haigh has been compared to novelists such as Anita Shreve and Alice McDermott (McDermott’s Charming Billy is one of Haigh’s favorites). Novels are where her passion lies these days, though she still loves the short-story form (she’s a huge John Cheever fan). “The short story is an unforgiving form—the reader won’t cut you much slack—whereas with a novel they’ll hang with you for a while,” she says.

That doesn’t mean she’s looking for the easy way out. In fact, for Haigh, the writing process is a slow chipping away rather than a manic outpouring of creativity. “I’m very dogged about writing; I do it every day,” she says. “And I’m absolutely unable to multitask. Writing happens most naturally for me when I’m not doing anything else.” Perhaps that singular focus is the condition Haigh must contend with—but it’s certainly not stopping her.

Cincinnati-based freelance writer Judi Ketteler covers a wide variety of lifestyle topics.

Pennie’s pick

SO MANY BOOKS cross my desk that it’s hard to imagine reading all of them—much less any of them twice. But this month’s Book Buyer’s Pick, Jennifer Haigh’s The Condition, is different. As a big fan of her previous novels, I wasn’t surprised to be bowled over by The Condition. The moment I turned the last page, I knew I’d revisit the McKotch family sometime soon—steeping myself in their lives. Much like a film you want to rewatch to catch things missed the first time, this novel is so rich and detailed that I’m sure I’m not the only one who will reread it and love it just as much the second time around.

Haigh’s The Condition is available at most Costco warehouses and on costco.com.
“The more you read, the more things you will know. The more that you learn, the more places you’ll go.” —Dr. Seuss

Explore the world of dinosaurs, the ocean, space, bugs and more in these nonfiction adventures with the Cat in the Hat.

RANDOM HOUSE BOOKS FOR YOUNG READERS/HARDCOVER
Available early July

Four best friends share exciting adventures and one special pair of pants in these delightful books.

DELACORTE BOOKS FOR YOUNG READERS/PAPERBACK
Available mid-July

Look for Sisterhood of the Traveling Pants Part 2 in theaters this August!

Sticker books featuring your child’s favorite characters are filled with tons of fun activities—guaranteed to provide hours of entertainment.

PHIDAL/PAPERBACK
Available early July

From the darkest depths of the ocean to the farthest reaches of outer space, these DK atlases are full of fascinating information that will educate your child and inspire his or her imagination.

DK CHILDREN/HARDCOVER
Available early July

“READING GIVES US SOMEPLACE TO GO when we have to stay where we are.” —MASON COOLEY

Explore a city the old-fashioned way – on foot! Each card in a City Walks deck contains a self-guided walking adventure.

CHRONICLE/HARDCOVER
Available early July

Get cooking with these cookbooks full of fast and easy recipes for the entire family!

GOOSEBERRY PATCH/SPIRAL BOUND
Available mid-July

Indulge in a little comfort food. These charming books combine deliciously simple recipes with inspiring stories and beautiful hand-drawn illustrations.

ANDREWS MCMEEL PUBLISHING/PAPERBACK
Available mid-July

Unravel the mysteries of the human body with this amazing book! Perfect for curious readers of all ages, The Human Body Book provides detailed information on the body’s structure, functions and disorders.

DK ADULT/HARDCOVER
Available late July

Heaven and hell collide when a defeated pastor and a condemned prisoner meet in Riven.

TYNDALE HOUSE PUBLISHERS/HARDCOVER
On sale July 22

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The engaging in fantasy and real life

JUVENILE
*Encyclopedia Mythologica: Fairies and Magical Creatures*, by Matthew Reinhart and Robert Sabuda. The first in a new series by two world-class pop-up masters gives readers a peek inside the fairy realm. Meet Shakespeare’s Queen Titania, springing up with her silver wings aflutter. Further along, a magical tree spreads its branches to reveal a face within its foliage, while flowers unfold and rearrange their petals, turning into flower fairies. This breathtaking 3-D book will hold people of all ages in its spell.

*The Sports Book and The Human Body Book*, from DK Publishing. In the grand tradition of Dorling Kindersley, these two books are lavishly illustrated, filled with facts and provide endless information on their subjects. Sports buffs will appreciate learning rules and game-winning strategies for more than 200 sports, including 35 Summer Olympics events. For kids interested in bodies and how they work—and who aren’t ready to dig into *Gray’s Anatomy*—there’s no better reference than *The Human Body Book*. 

FICTION
*Rules of Deception*, by Christopher Reich. Dr. Jonathan Ransom, world-class mountaineer and surgeon for Doctors Without Borders, is climbing in the Swiss Alps with his beautiful wife, Emma, when she is killed falling into a hidden crevasse. Twenty-four hours later, Jonathan receives an envelope addressed to his wife containing two baggage-claim tickets. He discovers that his only chance to survive the intrigue following him lies in uncovering the devastating truth behind the secret his wife kept from him.

*Damage Control*, by J.A. Jance. Sheriff Joanna Brady is the sleep-deprived mother of a newborn. Brady naps during town meetings, and she is drowning in paperwork, but nothing will stop her from doing her job. First, a young woman whose ex-boyfriend has been harassing her shoots to kill. But the dead man is the wrong man. Then a car plows through a retaining wall and plunges off the side of a mountain, and Joanna needs to find out whether it was an accident or something more sinister.

NONFICTION
*City Walks and City Walks with Kids*, from Chronicle Books. If your travels take you to New York City, Paris or Washington, D.C., Chronicle’s *City Walks* decks will keep kids and adults happy, exploring a city is as easy as picking one of the 50 cards from the deck and then setting out on an adventure. Cards in the adult decks have a detailed map on one side and local secrets on the other. The decks for kids also include transportation information and Web sites for local attractions.

*Moving Forward: Taking the Lead in Your Life*, by Dave Pelzer. Readers know Pelzer from his poignant books *A Child Called It*, *The Lost Boy* and others, which showcase his resilience and perseverance through terrible sadness. In this book, he walks readers through the process of learning how to turn the experience gained from past hurts into the power to live a better life and help others to do the same, using his trademark wisdom, support and tough love.—Valerie Ryan

FROM THE REALM of fantasy to the pain and pleasure of romance to chilling real-life stories of high-profile crime, the DVDs available this month at Costco and costco.com have something for everyone.

*The Spiderwick Chronicles*. What if magical creatures lived around us but somehow remained invisible? Such is the case in this film. Arthur Spiderwick, a turn-of-the-century naturalist, observed sprites, goblins, hobgoblins, ogres and trolls at work and documented their existence in his field guide. The film picks up the story 80 years later, when the Graces, descendants of the Spiderwick family, move into his rundown estate. Twin brothers Simon and Jared (Freddie Highmore), along with their sister, Mallory (Sarah Bolger), are pulled into an alternate—and very dangerous—reality.

*The Spiderwick Chronicles* is a tale of magical creatures that influence our world.

21. Adapted from Ben Mezrich’s book *Bringing Down the House: The Inside Story of Six M.I.T. Students Who Took Vegas for Millions*, this movie portrays Ben Campbell (Jim Sturgess), a shy but gifted M.I.T. student who can’t afford to continue his education. When he is invited to join a clandestine group of the school’s most brilliant students who spend weekends in Las Vegas armed with fake identities and the know-how to turn the odds at blackjack in their favor, he sees a possible solution to his financial problems. But it comes with certain risks.

*The Bank Job*. This film portrays a real bank robbery that took place in 1971 in London. It centers on Terry Leather (Jason Statham), a car dealer who is trying to leave behind his dodgy past to raise a family. Leather always avoided major-league scams, but when Martine Love (Saffron Burrows), a beautiful model from his old neighborhood, offers him a lead on a “foolproof” bank hit on London’s Baker Street, Leather sees it as the opportunity of a lifetime. Love targets a roomful of safe deposit boxes worth millions in cash and jewelry. But Leather and his crew don’t realize the boxes also contain a treasure trove of dirty secrets. These secrets thrust them into a deadly web of corruption and illicit scandal that spans London’s criminal underworld, the highest echelons of the British government and the royal family itself.

*Definitely, Maybe*. As Will Hayes (Ryan Reynolds), a 30-something going through a divorce, tries to answer a series of questions from his 10-year-old daughter, Maya (Abigail Breslin), about his life before marriage, he has to think through it all again. As he tries to tell her a PG-rated version of his life, Maya helps him understand that it’s definitely never too late to go back, and maybe even possible to find a happy ending.

Also look for *Drillbit Taylor*, *10,000 BC* and *Vantage Point*, as well as other movies and TV series.—Will Fifield

**JULY 2008 The Costco Connection 31**
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Kids! Kids! Kids!

Learning is fun and easy with these great new books from Costco! I can’t wait to get back to school and show everyone what I learned this summer.

With the Learn at Home series, your child can learn reading, language skills, spelling, math, science and social studies – at home!

It’s not surprising that more than 5 million copies of Comprehensive Curriculum are in print. Available in editions from preschool to sixth grade, these colorful volumes are full of all the skills your child needs to excel in school.

These Big Skills fun books are the perfect head start to get your little one ready for school. Together you’ll explore colors, shapes, letters and numbers, all while learning how to cut, fold, paste and more!

Learn to read, step by step! The Step into Reading program is designed to teach every child to read at his or her own pace. Step 1 is “Ready to Read,” for children who know the alphabet and are eager to begin reading. Step 2 is “Reading with Help,” for children who recognize familiar words on sight and can sound out new words with help. Beloved characters and bright illustrations will help instill a lifetime love of reading.

Now together in one convenient volume, the Inheritance Cycle Omnibus features Eragon and Eldest, plus never-before-seen original manuscript pages and brand-new cover art! Read Christopher Paolini’s first two bestselling fantasy epics before the third book comes out this fall.

Learning has never been more fun! Read, discover, learn and explore everything from dinosaurs to presidents to the human body. Incredibly hands-on and interactive, Time for Learning books are filled with tabs to pull, wheels to spin, flaps to open and more.

Turn the pages and discover a magical world of fairies and fantasy in this enchanting pop-up book! Watch as fairies transform into flowers and merfolk frolic beneath the sea, all in 3-D. Beautiful illustrations and whimsical stories ensure that this book will soon become one of your child’s favorites.

Products may not be available in all locations. All book jackets are subject to change.
Chilling out

Cold soups make for a delicious meal—any time of day

By Laura Langston

IT’S SUMMER and the soup’s on. No, that’s not a contradiction in terms. Not if we’re talking about cold soups.

Cold summer soups are refreshing, nutritious and easy. Most require little (if any) cooking and can be whipped up quickly in a blender or food processor. They benefit from being prepared ahead, either the night before they’re needed or early in the day when the kitchen is still cool. While cold soups are often featured as an appetizer or dessert (even as breakfast in some Scandinavian countries), they can be a mainstay around which to build a summer meal. Add a loaf of good bread, a wedge of cheese, a bottle of wine and some fruit for dessert, and head for the patio table.

To prepare a cold soup that’s ready immediately, chill your ingredients first—even canned items and ready-made broth. Never add ice to soups. It not only dilutes the flavor but reduces the nutritional value.

Chilled soups can be appealingly coarse like a Spanish gazpacho or velvety smooth like a vichyssoise. For a thicker soup, use the chop setting on your food processor and process for a short time. Processing longer on the liquefy setting will result in a thinner soup.

Cold muffle flavor; many sources recommend ramping up spicing for cold soups. However, when cold soup goes into the fridge (a great way to let those flavors blend), spices tend to become more pronounced. A good rule of thumb: Start with a moderate amount of spicing and adjust the flavor before serving.

Unless you have pre-chilled your ingredients, chill the soup for two to 12 hours. Check the consistency before serving. Cold soups sometimes thicken as they chill. If needed, adjust overly thick soups with some of the liquid used in the recipe. Always pre-chill your serving bowls; allow 10 minutes in the freezer or 30 minutes in the refrigerator.

Finally, don’t forget to garnish. Let imagination and taste be your guide—try crunchy croutons or tortilla strips, minced herbs or edible flowers, or a dollop of sour cream. [M]

Journalist-turned-novelist Laura Langston lives with her family in Victoria, British Columbia.

Gazpacho

THIS RECIPE RESULTS in a finely chopped soup; using a lower setting on the food processor will keep the ingredients chunky.

3 cups V8 juice
¼ cup lemon juice
2 cloves garlic, peeled
5 ripe tomatoes, peeled*
1 carrot, peeled and in chunks
1 small onion, in chunks
1 cucumber, peeled and chopped
1 green pepper, seeded and quartered
¼ cup fresh parsley
¼ cup fresh basil or cilantro
¼ cup olive oil
1 small jalapeño pepper, seeded (optional)
1 teaspoon salt or to taste
1 teaspoon pepper or to taste

In a food processor, combine 1 cup V8 juice, lemon juice, garlic, 2 tomatoes and one-third of the carrot, onion, cucumber, green pepper, parsley and basil. Process, then pour into a large bowl. Repeat the process, using 1 cup V8 juice, olive oil, jalapeño pepper, 1 tomato and one-third of the remaining vegetables. Repeat the process, using the last cup of V8 juice and the remaining tomato and vegetables.

Mix the three batches together. Add salt and pepper to taste. Refrigerate for at least 4 hours before serving. Garnish with chopped cucumber or tomato, croutons, silvered basil or a drizzle of olive oil. Makes 8 cups.

* To easily peel tomatoes, drop in a pot of boiling water for 1 to 2 minutes, until skin pulls back. Remove from boiling water, peel and use.

Creamy avocado soup

THE LIME JUICE adds a nice zing and helps retain the brilliant green color. Though the soup can be refrigerated for several days, for the best color retention serve within a few hours.

4 ripe avocados (1 ½ cups), peeled, pitted and chopped
½ cup lime juice
2 green onions, white part only
⅛ cup cilantro (leaves only, no stems)
1 ½ cups sour cream (nonfat is fine)
3 cups chicken stock
1 ½ teaspoons salt
1 to 2 teaspoons Tabasco sauce

In a food processor, purée avocado, lime juice, green onions and cilantro. Add sour cream and blend again. Pour into a large bowl. Blend in chicken stock, salt and Tabasco sauce. Refrigerate for a minimum of 2 hours before serving (unless ingredients are cold to start). Adjust seasonings and check consistency. If it’s too thick, add a little more stock.

Garnish with sour cream, cilantro or tortilla chips. Makes 8 cups.

Did you know?

The word “soup” originates from the Middle English word “sop”—a dish originally consisting of thick stew or soup soaked up with pieces of bread.
Reunion
9-Piece Dining Set

Finished in a deep, rich Merlot and accented in dark chocolate leather, the Reunion 9-Piece Dining Set will bring warmth and comfort to your home. The chairs are quality constructed with solid hardwoods, and the table is beautifully adorned with hand-selected cherry veneer, making this counter-height dining set the perfect complement to any dining area.

Dining Set Includes:
1 Table: 54 in. H x 54 in. W x 36 in. D
1 Leaf: 18 in. x 54 in.
8 Chairs: 21 1/8 in. H x 19 in. W x 42 in. D
ITM./ART. 234642

WareHouse Only

Valencia Wine Buffet
with Marble Top

Perfectly suited for both formal and relaxed venues.
- Mahogany Veneers
- Marble Top
- 3 Drawers; 3 Pullout Trays
- 2 Cabinets, Each with Adjustable Shelf, Wineglass Rack
- Center Areas with Fixed Shelf, 2 Removable Wine Bin Grids
- 53.5 in. W x 19 in. D x 36 in. H

ITM./ART. 989724
WareHouse Only

WareHouse Only
**CHANDLER RECLINING SOFA & LOVE SEAT**

- 100% Leather Upholstery
  Soft, easy to clean and durable
- Pillow-Top Seating
  Plush, soft padding for added comfort
- PowerRecline®
  Reclines at the touch of a button

**TRISTAN RECLINER**

- Microfiber Cover
  Our microfiber cover is soft, durable, easy to clean and resists staining.
- Rocker Recliner
  Multifunctional base provides full reclining and rocking action.
- Chaise Seating
  Provides continuous, head-to-toe support when reclined.

**CHICAGO CHAIR**

- Full-Grain All-Leather Upholstery
  Soft, durable and easy to clean, nothing matches the comfort and feel of leather.
- Classic Nailhead Trim
  Trim accents the classic curves of the chair with antique brass nails.
- Accented Hand-Carving
  Elegant hand-carved wood accents enhance the traditional styling of the chair.

WAREHOUSE ONLY
Holden Collection
Sleep, study, get organized

trundle can be used as bed or divided storage drawer  ●  full-extension drawer glides
dovetailed drawer construction  ●  non-toxic paint  ●  custom beveled moulding
clear protective lacquer finish for easy dusting and cleaning  ●  heirloom-quality furniture

Accessories not included

ITM./ART. 285759  Twin Trundle Bed
ITM./ART. 285760  6-Drawer Dresser
ITM./ART. 285761  Tower Bookcase
ITM./ART. 285762  Desk, Hutch and Chair Set

Warehouse/Costco.com

Kayla Collection
Comes with two sets of bedpost finials and drawer knobs: crystal-like glass and wood!

Accessories not included

ITM./ART. 254677  Twin Trundle Bed
ITM./ART. 254678  7-Drawer Dresser
ITM./ART. 254679  Low Bookcase
ITM./ART. 254680  Desk, Hutch and Chair Set

Nightstand available at costco.com

Warehouse Only
Lane Home Furnishings has been making people’s lives more comfortable for nearly a century providing quality, selection and value. We know you will enjoy your Lane furniture for years to come.
Vexed in the city
Why does shopping for furniture seem so difficult?

By Marni Jameson

I’M HAVING LUNCH with several women from the neighborhood. As often happens among women, the conversation turns to home decorating.

“Do you have your dining room set yet?” one neighbor asks Lisa.

“No,” she says to her plate. “I couldn’t decide.”

Lisa hangs her head and stops eating her rigatoni.

We all share a moment of respectful silence. Who hasn’t been there? Paralyzed into a state of indecision while a room lies bare.

“It’s just such a big decision,” Lisa continues, as if exposing a deep character flaw.

Like the rest of us, Lisa has swallowed society’s dictum that a home is a mirror of the woman within, a sword we live and die by. What’s more, thanks to years of indoctrination by Hallmark specials and Better Homes & Gardens, we all have a vision of the ideal dining room.

This is the room where memories will be made. The table will serve as a centerpiece during celebrations of holidays and family milestones: graduations, engagements, releases from jail. If the table isn’t right, the occasion and all those potentially warm memories will be marred by bad taste.

In other words, this is not just a table, it’s The Table.

“I finally found a table I like,” Lisa continues, “but I don’t like the chairs. Or the table doesn’t have leaves and I want leaves for my grandchildren.” No one points out that, since her kids are only 4 and 7, grandkids might be awhile.

“I know what you’re going through,” one neighbor says. “Legs stained, curved, carved or tapered? Table round, rectangular or square? Glass, wood or iron?”

“A room where all the furniture is one height lacks interest,” says Tom Allardyce, of Hendrix, Allardyce in Los Angeles. “He likes to vary furniture heights to fit the architecture and especially likes higher-backed sofas.”

“Do the scoot test,” says another. “When buying a chair or sofa, sit in it and scoot your behind forward, back and side to side. The legs shouldn’t wiggle. Look for frames of hardwood (e.g., oak), not softwood (e.g., pine).”

Push your thumb into the seat cushion. Watch how fast the seat bounces back. Quick rebound means good foam quality. —MJ

I nod sympathetically, though I can’t recall a moment in my marriage when my husband ever said, “Why don’t you buy some furniture?” That would be rather like letting a bear loose in a butcher shop. Instead, I flash on the two long years our living room remained unfurnished, unless you count the Barbie Jeep and the fake ficus.

“It’s so embarrassing,” I said back then to my husband. “People think we have no money.”

“They’re right,” he said. Sometimes his realism really bugs me.

True in some homes, rooms lie bare because the couple has the money but not the inspiration, as in Lisa’s case. Others have the vision but not the dough. We often lack both.

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Costco member Marni Jameson (www.marni jameson.com) is a nationally syndicated columnist. This excerpt is adapted from her book The House Always Wins (De Capo Press 2008), reprinted with permission. The book is available at costco.com.

JULY 2008 The Costco Connection 39
Occasional Tables

With handsome design and rich Okoumé veneer and wood solids, Westgate offers an occasional collection in a refined casual style. Functional drawers with antiqued brass finished hardware and lower open shelves provide additional display and storage space, completing the relaxed appeal.

Cocktail Table – ITM./ART. 858126
End Table – ITM./ART. 277163
Sofa Table – ITM./ART. 858127
By Stephanie E. Ponder

INTERIOR DESIGNER and Costco member Erinn Valencich has a few core beliefs about interior design. She believes in mixing up styles and that there are no hard-and-fast rules to follow.

Valencich has been running her own Los Angeles–based interior design firm (www.omniartedesign.com) for three years and has hosted several shows for HGTV. Recently she shared her thoughts with The Connection on creative uses for some of the accent pieces available at Costco this month.

Benches. Benches work well on a covered patio, in a mudroom or in an entryway. To help reduce clutter, look for one with storage bins so that each member of the family can have a place for his or her shoes. Outdoors they can be used for storing gardening tools or toys.

Chairs. You can never have too much seating. A chair with clean lines will look good whether a house has a traditional or contemporary design scheme. Set a chair in a corner with a lamp and a small table to add lighting or display family photos. Place one in the bedroom for extra seating or to catch clothing if, like me, you have trouble deciding what to wear in the morning.

Lighting. Lighting is very important and can change a room dramatically. It’s important to use mixed sources of light to avoid having dark corners. If you have a room you don’t like the lighting: adjust the lighting to brighten it up. Lamps can be scattered throughout a room or used as a pair in opposite corners to add elegance to functionality.

Mirrors. Instead of hanging a mirror, lean a large one against one wall. It will open up the room and add sparkle. Also, if you place a mirror across from a window it will help bring the outdoors inside.

Ottomans. Ottomans are great all-purpose pieces. An ottoman with an upholstered top can serve as a good footrest; an ottoman with built-in drawers can serve as a convenient place to store magazines and remote controls. When you’re entertaining, ottomans also offer a handy surface for placing a tray of drinks or appetizers. Instead of drawers, some ottomans have hinged tops and can be used in a guest room as a place to store extra blankets and pillows. Used in a kid’s room they create extra seating and storage for toys or papers. Ottomans look great tucked underneath a console table.

Tables. Placed at the back of a sofa, a table is a good place to add lighting or display family photos. Place one against a wall to bring life to a dead space or in the entryway as a place for storing keys and the mail.

Another trend in tables is the bar-height table. Waist-height or taller, square versions of these tables are great for smaller spaces such as apartments or condos. If you have room, they’re also a fun seating option for a game room.

Shelves. Open, sleek shelving is great in any space because it doesn’t look heavy. In an office or bedroom, shelves are a great way to make use of a blank wall. To make the most of shelves, don’t stuff them full. Displaying just a few photos, books or plants will help create a beautiful display.

Room dividers, especially with shelves, serve a practical purpose while adding to a room’s style. Room dividers can be used to break up a large space, or use one to separate an eating area or a home office space if it’s part of a bedroom or living room.

Miscellaneous pieces. Entertaining is so much fun. A small bar set with storage for stemware and bottles would be a great addition to a dining room. Look for a marble top for easy cleanup and to take the worry out of spills.

Whether you’re entertaining guests or your family, aside from the couch, the TV console really sets the style of a room. If you want to update a room’s look, a TV console with clean lines is a good choice.

The Costco Connection

This month Costco warehouses will have a variety of home décor items. Find additional selections on costco.com.
BUYING FURNITURE is both exciting and a bit of a challenge. New furniture adds dimension and function to your household. This is especially true of case goods—furniture intended to provide interior storage such as chests of drawers, armoires and entertainment centers, as well as furniture sold in sets, such as bedroom and dining room collections. The following tips, provided by Costco’s furniture buying team, will help you find case goods that will last.

Material. Look for furniture made of hardwoods, such as cherry, maple, ash and oak, as they are much more durable than soft woods such as pine.

Joinery. Seek pieces that feature dovetail construction, as this joinery technique prevents joints from pulling apart. The drawers should be aligned when mounted, and the gap tolerance around them should not exceed one-eighth of an inch.

Watch your back. Check the back of each piece. Poorly made furniture will have stapled backs. Look for pieces with fully finished backs that have been inset and fastened with screws.

Check your drawers. Bedroom sets should have cedar-lined drawers, as this special feature helps preserve fine clothing.

Hardware. Did the manufacturer use solid metal hardware or hollow? Furniture companies often use hollow hardware as a cost-saving measure, but this practice sacrifices strength. Full-extension ball-bearing glides should operate smoothly. All hardware should be free of dings and scratches.

Check the finish. A durable finish will enhance the natural beauty of hardwoods, but, more important, it will protect case goods

AESTHETICALLY, the Kayla Collection is the quintessential girly girl’s bedroom set, but that’s not the reason I’m highlighting it. Quality-wise, this set incorporates all the features of fine furniture, which ensures it will stand up to any pajama party. The collection has dovetail joinery on all drawers with full-extension glides. All pieces use nontoxic paint and a protective finish for easy and simple cleaning. The twin bed features an easy-pull-out trundle that can be used as an extra bed for overnight guests or as a divided storage drawer for toys, clothes and collectibles.

Daughters will appreciate that the set can be personalized with the two sets of knobs and bedpost finials: crystal-like glass for a romantic look or wood for a more streamlined appearance. Parents will value the sturdy hardwood construction, top craftsmanship and great Costco value. This is truly beautiful, heirloom-quality furniture that will be enjoyed for generations to come.

The Camille
Television Stand

- Solid Poplar and American Cherry wood veneer in Rich Cherry finish
- Antique brass decorative hardware
- Two center media drawers
- Ventilated gaming console storage with flip-down door panel
- Adjustable equipment shelves and base with inset metal ventilation panels
- “Burst pattern” veneer top surface
- Removable back panels for equipment access
- Extended interior cable management

Accommodates: 60in. flat panel (152.4cm.)

ITM/ART: 220286
Product Dimensions:
20.5in. (W) x 60.7in. (D) x 28in. (H)
52cm. x 154.1cm. x 71.1cm.

WAREHOUSE ONLY

FRANCE FREEMAN
Furniture Buyer

FRANCE FREEMAN
against problems that arise with temperature changes and moisture. Look for a uniform sheen across the surface of furniture pieces. If you’re buying painted furniture, make sure it is lead-free.

Planet-friendly packaging. As we become increasingly aware of our responsibility to operate in an environmentally responsible manner, we strongly encourage our suppliers to use earth-friendly packaging, such as using honeycomb corrugate instead of Styrofoam. If you share this conviction, it’s worth asking retail sources about their packaging. If nothing else it sends the message that it factors into your purchasing decisions.

A measure of control. A bonus tip: Measure the areas in your home for which you are buying furniture before you go shopping. This may sound obvious, but many people go furniture shopping without taking these measurements. It’s also a good idea to bring a tape measure with you to the store. It can be very difficult to judge perspective in an unfamiliar setting, especially if you’re in a large building.—Will Fifield

Discover décor and more on costco.com

WHEN IT COMES to products for home decorating or remodeling, Costco offers members lots of options. At the warehouses* you’ll find indoor and outdoor furniture (available seasonally), bedding and appliances, artwork (available in rotating Special Events; see page 70) and home-improvement services (at Special Order kiosks; see page 46).

In addition, many unique, money-saving items are available on costco.com, which has different merchandise than the warehouses and can stock seasonal items all year round. There are several tabs to explore for home-oriented prod-

CONTINUED ON PAGE 44

IF YOU’RE FOND of the earthy comfort of leather furniture, the Berkline Chandler collection is a great living room combination at an incredible value. Costco has long turned to Berkline, a company founded in 1928, for quality furniture. The power-reclining sofa and love seat are covered in 100 percent Australian cowhide. Many suppliers use leather on the seating areas but cover the back and sides with carefully matched vinyl to lower the price. This collection is covered entirely in leather.

The power-recline feature allows you to adjust the sofa or love seat into that “just right” position. The backs of the sofa and the love seat are removable for easy transport, and they’re both built to fit through standard 32-inch-wide doorways. Both pieces have a protective finish that helps prevent spills from soaking in and resists UV fading. Best of all, Costco offers this heirloom-quality collection at a savings of between 35 to 60 percent compared to national competitors.

—Valerie Van Valkenburg
Furniture Buyer

WHEN IT COMES TO PRODUCTS FOR HOME DECORATING OR REMODELING, COSTCO OFFERS MEMBERS LOTS OF OPTIONS. AT THE WAREHOUSES* YOU’LL FIND INDOOR AND OUTDOOR FURNITURE (AVAILABLE SEASONALLY), BEDDING AND APPLIANCES, ARTWORK (AVAILABLE IN ROTATING SPECIAL EVENTS; SEE PAGE 70) AND HOME-IMPROVEMENT SERVICES (AT SPECIAL ORDER KIOSKS; SEE PAGE 46).

IN ADDITION, MANY UNIQUE, MONEY-SAVING ITEMS ARE AVAILABLE ON COSTCO.COM, WHICH HAS DIFFERENT MERCHANDISE THAN THE WAREHOUSES AND CAN STOCK SEASONAL ITEMS ALL YEAR ROUND. THERE ARE SEVERAL TABS TO EXPLORE FOR HOME-ORIENTED PROD-

CONTINUED ON PAGE 44

IF YOU’RE FOND OF THE EARTHY COMFORT OF LEATHER FURNITURE, THE BERKLINE CHANDLER COLLECTION IS A GREAT LIVING ROOM COMBINATION AT AN INCREDIBLE VALUE. COSTCO HAS LONG TURNED TO BERKLINE, A COMPANY FOUNDED IN 1928, FOR QUALITY FURNITURE. THE POWER-RECLINING SOFA AND LOVE SEAT ARE COVERED IN 100 PERCENT AUSTRALIAN COWHIDE. MANY SUPPLIERS USE LEATHER ON THE SEATING AREAS BUT COVER THE BACK AND SIDES WITH CAREFULLY MATCHED VINYL TO LOWER THE PRICE. THIS COLLECTION IS COVERED ENTIRELY IN LEATHER.

THE POWER-RECLINE FEATURE ALLOWS YOU TO ADJUST THE SOFA OR LOVE SEAT INTO THAT “JUST RIGHT” POSITION. THE BACKS OF THE SOFA AND THE LOVE SEAT ARE REMOVABLE FOR EASY TRANSPORT, AND THEY’RE BOTH BUILT TO FIT THROUGH STANDARD 32-INCH-WIDE DOORWAYS. BOTH PIECES HAVE A PROTECTIVE FINISH THAT HELPS PREVENT SPILLS FROM SOAKING IN AND RESISTS UV FADING. BEST OF ALL, COSTCO OFFERS THIS HEIRLOOM-QUALITY COLLECTION AT A SAVINGS OF BETWEEN 35 TO 60 PERCENT COMPARED TO NATIONAL COMPETITORS.

—WILL FIFIELD

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—WILL FIFIELD
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ucts: “Appliances,” “Bed & Bath,”
“Decor,” “Furniture,” “Hardware,”
“Housewares,” “Office” and “Outdoor.”

For example, under the “Hardware”
link you’ll find such items as custom
moldings, windows and doors from
Milgard, copper sinks, pedestal bathtubs,
bathroom tiles, pebble flooring and more.
For the kitchen there is cabinetry, pantry
storage systems, copper range hoods,
sinks and faucets.

In the “Housewares” category
there’s a lighted stainless steel and
copper pot rack.

Look in the “Decor” category and
you’ll find custom shutters, wine stor-
ing, closet systems and custom carpet-
ing. You can even choose art with
customized mats
and frames, like the example to
the right, through
a simple four-
step process.

First, select
the style of art
you like, such
as abstract,
landscape or
photographic.
Then view the
options within
that style.

Once you’ve selected a piece, the
Web site allows you to choose a wall
color that approximates that in your
room and then pick complementary
mats and a frame. Place your order
and your custom-framed art will arrive
within two weeks. The site even gives a
bit of background about the artists
and their work.

Speaking of art, don’t miss the
indoor/outdoor artwork. These canvas
prints have a protective UV coating that
keeps the colors from fading. They’re a
new idea to spark up an outdoor room,
but they could also work in a bathroom,
if you’re worried about dampness harm-
ning traditional art.

The “Furniture” tab will take you to
furnishings for every room in your home,
from kids’ rooms to the home office.

—Anita Thompson

*Members in the greater Phoenix and Seattle
areas can also find a full-line selection of
furniture and electronics at Costco Home.
DRESS YOUR WINDOWS IN THESE STUNNING NUMBERS.

Rebate savings are effective on purchases made between May 15 and August 31, 2008. Does not apply to previous purchases. Savings apply on up to 10 windows per product. For the purpose of this promotion, each shutter unit is defined as a continuous opening installed on a window or door. One opening may have multiple panels. Manufacturer’s rebate. Limit one rebate form per household. Limitations and restrictions apply. Allow 6-8 weeks for receipt of rebate check.

Products and services are available in most locations. All services are provided by Custom Decorators Inc. ©2008 Hunter Douglas Inc. ® and ™ are trademarks of their respective corporations.


Call 1-888-992-2773 to schedule your complimentary in-home appointment.

Hunter Douglas

Ask about our full line of Hunter Douglas products and other summer savings.

Rebate savings are effective on purchases made between May 15 and August 31, 2008. Does not apply to previous purchases. Savings apply on up to 10 windows per product. For the purpose of this promotion, each shutter unit is defined as a continuous opening installed on a window or door. One opening may have multiple panels. Manufacturer’s rebate. Limit one rebate form per household. Limitations and restrictions apply. Allow 6-8 weeks for receipt of rebate check. Products and services are available in most locations. All services are provided by Custom Decorators Inc. ©2008 Hunter Douglas Inc. ® and ™ are trademarks of their respective corporations.

WAREHOUSE/COSTCO.COM/COSTCO HOME

BOULEVARD
Television Console

kathy ireland HOME
Martin

"...finding solutions for families, especially busy moms."

Call 1-888-992-2773 to schedule your complimentary in-home appointment.

McKinley Hall Bench

As beautiful as it is practical

Constructed of birch solids, the McKinley hall bench will be the most useful piece of furniture in your home. The four wicker bins allow you to store almost anything, while the five drawers are great for organizing. The luxurious all top-grain leather cushion provides a soft landing for you to sit on.

Distributed by Kathy Ireland Home by Martin 7757 St. Andrews Ave., San Diego, CA 92154
Kathy Ireland HOME® by Martin Furniture is an authorized manufacturer for Kathy Ireland Worldwide.™

WAREHOUSE ONLY
FOR GOOD VALUE, convenience and a great approach to improving your green footprint on many home-remodeling projects, look no further than Costco’s Special Order kiosks.

Special Order kiosks are available in most Costco warehouses across the country, and two of the kiosk programs can be found on costco.com. They are where members can find a growing variety of customized home-improvement programs—from carpets and window treatments to countertops, gutters and home heating and cooling solutions—at great savings. The selection of programs may vary between warehouses.

Special Order kiosk buyers Chris Hendrix and Al Omer and their teams do all the groundwork. They meet with suppliers, investigate products for quality and value, scrutinize craftsmanship, then ink the best deal.

That means all members need to do is call the toll-free phone number printed on each program’s brochure to confirm availability in their area and/or set up a free in-home appointment with a professional consultant, if needed. With two of the programs—carpeting and window fashions—a visit to costco.com (go to the Decor category and select “Services for Your Home”) is all it takes to get things started.

**Carpet diem**

The Special Order kiosk carpet program includes measuring, installation and a residential-carpet quality-assurance warranty. No remnants or discontinued styles are ever allowed.

Shaw, a leading U.S. manufacturer of a wide variety of flooring, is Costco’s longtime carpet partner. All Shaw Special Order kiosk residential and commercial carpets are premium grade and made in the U.S.

If you’re sensitive to or concerned about fumes associated with carpet installation, it’s worth mentioning the level of gaseous volatile organic compounds (VOCs) in Shaw’s carpets. VOC gases are released by a variety of manufactured products, such as paints, cleaning supplies, pesticides, and building materials and furnishings, including carpets.

More and more manufacturers have been trending away from using VOCs, and that includes Shaw. Their recyclable carpets are certified by the Carpet and Rug Institute Green Label Plus for the lowest amounts of VOCs on the market today.

I requested a sample of eco-chic Anso nylon from Al and found no difference between it and other similarly rated nylon carpets. It has a great, luxurious feel. Al reports, “Anso nylon is extremely durable, fashionable and inherently stain resistant with Shaw R2X, a combined soil- and stain-repellent system, applied to the carpet.”

Commendably, Shaw doubles the texture warranties on all carpets sold through Costco if the PremiumTouch™ foam cushion is also used. (We installed this green pad, containing recycled content, in our home last year and found it pleasantly fume-free and cushy soft.)

For those in a hurry, Rapid Install is now offered in many areas. Pick from Shaw’s most popular colors and styles of carpet and Costco will ensure that it gets installed within 10 business days from the date of purchase. Call 1-888-992-2773 to schedule a complimentary appointment in your home or to ask questions.

**DuPont is in the LEED**

Costco kiosks offer a variety of beautiful, long-lasting DuPont countertop materials, including solid acrylic Corian® and polymer/natural quartz Zodiaq, that are scratch, stain and heat resistant.

Nontoxic and nonallergenic, Corian and...
Zodiaq are Greenguard Indoor Air Quality Certified for low VOC emissions. Made in the U.S., Corian is also 100 percent renewable. The brand’s new and extremely attractive Terra Collection has been certified by Scientific Certification Systems to contain pre-consumer recycled content.

Depending on the project and the area of the country, these countertops may contribute to credits in the U.S. Green Building Council’s Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) sustainable construction rating system.

Chris says, “Costco has an excellent value story on our installed DuPont and granite countertop surfaces. The process is simple for our members. A call to our toll-free number, 1-877-483-6226, will allow them to check availability and schedule a free in-home consultation, where a consultant will help them select a surface material that works best for their space and budget. Right now is a great time to call, as we’re running a promotion during the month of August, offering members added value on qualifying purchases.”

Chris adds, “In addition to the excellent value of purchasing through the Special Order kiosk, many local and state governments and even utility companies offer rebates and tax incentives for buying eco-friendly products. A good place to learn more is at www.energystar.gov.”

Eco-friendly extras

Kiosk brands and programs can vary across the country. Here are some additional eco-friendly brands and products that may be available at a warehouse kiosk near you.

**Pella® windows and doors.** This 83-year-old company based in Pella, Iowa, earned the U.S. Department of Energy’s Energy Star® Partner of the Year award for leadership in manufacturing energy-efficient windows in 2007 and 2008. In addition to crafting gorgeous windows and doors that help reduce heating and cooling costs, Pella gives preference to suppliers who practice responsible harvesting and replenishment of forest resources. About 60 percent of Pella’s wood supply comes from forests that have been third-party certified as sustainable by the Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI) or the Forest Stewardship Council. Another 20 percent comes from suppliers that operate according to SFI standards.

**Lennox® home comfort systems.** Lennox heating, ventilation and air-conditioning systems save energy and money and keep the indoor air quality healthy. Many models are Energy Star qualified, which is particularly promising, as the Environmental Protection Agency announced in 2005 that if just one in 10 households installed Energy Star heating and cooling products more than 17 billion pounds of pollution could be kept out of the air.

**Schrock® Cabinetry.** Schrock is part of the MasterBrand family (the second-largest cabinet manufacturer in North America) and has become certified in the Kitchen Cabinet Manufacturers Association Environmental Stewardship Program by choosing woods from certified sustainably managed forests and using low-emission coatings.

**LeafGuard® gutters.** This one-piece, seamless, covered gutter system is built to stay clog-free from leaves and debris and is manufactured in the U.S. from at least 90 percent recycled aluminum. All old gutters removed from members’ homes are recycled too. I’m pleased with LeafGuard’s unique rain collection system, which saves precious water and money by efficiently harvesting rainwater for yard use.

**Hunter Douglas® window fashions.** Window treatments act as insulation, which in turn helps save money on utility bills and conserve natural resources. Hunter Douglas, the largest window-covering company in North America, already offers the super-energy-efficient Duette® honeycomb shades. For potentially greater energy savings, consider the company’s new motorized window coverings that help manage hard-to-reach windows.

Kermit was wrong. With these programs, it is easy being (and saving) green!

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**Costco vs. the competition**

WE COMPARED PRICES on granite, Corian® and Zodiaq countertops at Costco and three retail stores. Retailers A and B are national home-improvement chains; retailer C is a specialty kitchen and bath dealer. The percentages indicate the average savings at Costco over each retailer.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Retailer</th>
<th>Granite</th>
<th>Corian</th>
<th>Zodiaq</th>
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<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<td>B</td>
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* Based on survey in Boston, Massachusetts, in March 2008.
lose weight, not nutrition

a daily multivitamin is recommended as part of the alli program

Kirkland Signature offers three unique and different multivitamins for individual stages of life. Each of these multivitamins was created to optimize its nutritional value. Our commitment to optimal nutrition is recognized by the makers of alli and is recommended as part of the alli weight management program.
By Annette Alvarez-Peters

ONE EXCITING ASPECT of exploring the world of wines is that treasures lie off the beaten path. Don’t shy away from the unfamiliar. Here’s a look at five fashionable varietals you might not have thought to pick up ... until now!

Viognier (vee-yawn-yay) is a full-bodied white—very aromatic, with attractive rich mineral flavors. Most have lovely stone-fruit flavors of apricots and peaches and are meant to be consumed young. The wines are produced in the northern Rhône and South Australia regions, as well as in California and South Africa. Viognier, traditionally a blending grape, has become a trendy single varietal that is crisp as well as in California and South Africa.

Pinot Gris (pee-noh gray) is a light-bodied white, high in acidity and grown in cool areas such as Oregon, Alsace and northeast Italy, where it is also known as Pinot Grigio. Oregon Pinot Gris delivers bold and expressive flavors and is fuller in body than Italian Pinot Grigio, which tends to be light bodied and fairly neutral. Alsace Pinot Gris has attractive notes of honey and spice. The wines have a lovely creaminess—perfect with a summer salad or light seafood.

Malbec (mal-bek), rich and lush, has become a trademark of Argentina’s best wine regions. Malbec has a deep red color, soft tannins and robust fruit flavors. Malbec is also produced in France, where it is one of the five red grape varietals found in the blend of Bordeaux wines. This fashionable red variety offers a tremendous value-to-quality ratio and can stand up to almost anything you throw on the barbecue.

Tempranillo (temp-rah-nee-yo), Spain’s most noble wine grape, grows in moderate to hot climates throughout several Spanish wine regions, especially in Rioja and Ribera del Duero. The variety is also found in Portugal and Argentina. These wines have a balanced acidity, are usually higher in alcohol and feature a wide range of flavors from strawberries to plums.

Tempranillos can be enjoyed now or can be long-lived: As the wine ages, the flavors can take on a savory, meaty character and a beautiful spicy note. Try it with grilled lamp chops. Grenache (greh-nash), or Garnacha (gar-nah-chah) in Spain, is a red varietal that produces a wide range of styles, from a bone-dry, light-colored rosé to a big, ripe, jammy fruit bomb. The grape is planted throughout the southern Rhône region, from Châteauneuf-du-Pape to Tavel, as well as Spain and South Australia. It’s a perfect complement to barbecued chicken wings in the summer, as well as various cheeses.

The lovely strawberry-flavored, refreshing rosé wines from Tavel and rosatos from Spain are popular, as are the concentrated, rich wines with white peppered notes found in Châteauneuf-du-Pape and the fruity rich blends from Spain or Australia. Take a chance and experiment with at least one new varietal this summer. Cheers! 

By Annette Alvarez-Peters

Erin Manning

Annette Alvarez-Peters oversees Costco’s national wine, spirits and beer program.

My CHEESE TIP this month is simple: Try local! Many people stay with Old World favorites when making their cheese choices. And for good reason: The Europeans have perfected cheesemaking over thousands of years. But American cheesemakers have done wonderful things by blending time-honored traditions from Europe and abroad with local influences and flavors—and classic American ingenuity.

In 43 of 50 states, families and entrepreneurs are perfecting sustainable, high-quality cheesemaking. Costco’s cheese-buying team chooses a few of these local products to bring in to select warehouses.

For example, Costco warehouses in the Seattle area carry Beecher’s cheese, made in the city’s historic Pike Place Market. In California, members will find Bravo Farms cheeses, while in Vermont, Carr Valley cheese is a sure winner.

What makes American cheeses special? They’re often a creative twist on a traditional variety. A number are farmstead—they are made from milk produced on the cheesemaker’s farm. And the price can be lower than for European cheeses.

These small farms are making great cheeses in limited quantities. The dedication to quality can be tasted in every batch. Your new favorite may be from a cheesemaker in your own backyard!

Featured at Costco

Incognito Viognier item #158708
Beringer Viognier item #281837
Williamette Valley Pinot Gris item #476424
Kris Pinot Grigio item #310444
Montes Cherub Rosé item #157377
Marqués de Cáceres Rioja item #10862
Marqués de Cáceres Rioja Reserve item #128269
Beaucastel Coudoulet Rouge item #35696
Pascual Toso Reserve Malbec item #183433
Not all wines available at all locations. See costco.com for more wine choices.

For information on Costco’s Kirkland Signature® wines, go to costco.com, click on “Kirkland Connection Magazine,” then “Kirkland Signature Wine Connection.”

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Buyer’s Pick

Sarah George, Buyer, Cheese

MY CHEESE TIP this month is simple: Try local!

The Costco Connection

Costco carries a variety of local cheeses, with selections varying by location.

• Beecher’s Cheese—Beecher’s Flagship item #35366
• Marin French Cheese—Rouge et Noir (Soft Cheese Sampler) item #22882

See costco.com for other selections.

Featured at Costco

Incognito Viognier item #158708
Beringer Viognier item #281837
Williamette Valley Pinot Gris item #476424
Kris Pinot Grigio item #310444
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Not all wines available at all locations. See costco.com for more wine choices.

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- Automotive Style Quiet Wheel System
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- Locking Handle System
- Expandable

WAREHOUSE ONLY
A new place to (re)visit

Costco Travel’s redesigned Web site puts the world at your fingertips

By T. Foster Jones

As a traveler, I can always find good excuses to revisit places I’ve enjoyed before. In addition to repeating some of the pleasant experiences of previous visits, I invariably discover some new and exciting aspect of the area that I previously overlooked or that has since been created.

I recently had the opportunity to do something similar, in a virtual travel sense, when I logged on to costco.com and clicked on Costco Travel. The online presence of the site has changed dramatically, becoming a much more informative and interactive experience.

Home sweet home

As soon as you open Costco Travel’s home page, the launching pad for your virtual (and literal) travel plans, you’ll see several dramatic revisions. The page has been restructured, with a grid of bold, exciting photographs and plain, easy-to-navigate menu options designed to make information about all of Costco Travel’s services—cruises, destinations, rental cars and specialty vacations—simple to find.

“Choosing your vacation should be fun and hassle-free, so, to make your decision quicker and easier, we’ve added new information and vacation-planning tools,” says Shannon Parker of Costco Travel.

Of particular interest in the center of the page is a selection of vacation packages and destinations listed under the headings of Buyer’s Choice or Your Way.

“The Buyer’s Choice packages include accommodations, transportation and sightseeing tours at particular destinations that are recommended by Costco Travel buyers as particularly good values,” says Shannon. With these packages, the hotels have been selected for you, although the length of your stay can be extended to suit your needs.

For Costco members who want more flexibility in their travel arrangements, Costco Travel has created the Your Way packages.

Connecting

For complete vacation information, visit costco.com and click on “Travel” or call Costco Travel toll free at 1-877-849-2730.

“These allow members to select from a number of featured accommodations, as well as transportation, sightseeing tours and length of stay, to create their own unique experience,” says Shannon.

Dig deeper

Click on any of the home-page menu selections and you will find there is now a wealth of destination and travel information, including maps, more detailed hotel descriptions and photos, navigation tools, additional cruise-line and cruise-ship information, and improved cruise-planning content.

“Selling a limited selection of hotels and destinations allowed us to create rich content for the hotels we do offer,” says Matt Browning, information technology director at Costco Travel.

“We coupled this with interactive maps that pinpoint the location of each hotel, which you can then click on for even more information. This is a personal touch that you won’t find on most travel sites.”

On the cruise menu, you can now make plans by destination—Alaska, Asia, Caribbean, Europe, Mexico, Panama Canal, South America and South Pacific—or by cruise line, including Azamara, Carnival, Celebrity, Cunard, Disney, Holland America, Princess, Regent, Royal Caribbean, Seabourn, Silversea, Uniworld and Windstar.

The menu bar at the bottom of the page provides additional information about Costco Travel, including frequently asked questions for single and group travelers as well as other helpful tips. “The buyers at Costco Travel have also created a ‘Hotel Ratings’ menu offering their own honest assessments of properties, which can occasionally differ from a hotel’s self-assessment,” says Shannon.

Let the experts be your guide

Much of the additional content comes courtesy of Fodor’s, one of the most established destination travel specialists in the world. Shannon says that Fodor’s worked with Costco Travel to provide the most relevant information specific to the destinations being offered to Costco members.

“The intent behind all of this was to allow our members to create a fully realized travel plan, with enough information to allow them to visualize every detail on their itinerary.”

Best of all, whatever your vacation plans are, it will soon be possible to book Costco Travel trips online from the convenience of your own computer.

That will definitely be worth a return trip.
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Westmont 5-Piece Bedroom Collection  Includes bed, 2 nightstands, dresser and mirror.
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Copenhagen 5-Piece Bedroom Collection  Includes bed, 2 nightstands, dresser and mirror.
King/Cal King $1,999.99 Queen $1,899.99 Delivered  Valid 7/01/08–7/31/08  #11284965

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DIRECTV’s best programming package, when you buy NFL SUNDAY TICKET™ for only $4.99/mo. for 4 months

With a one-year DIRECTV lease (with other household members), get the following:

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*1,000 average savings is calculated by comparing transaction-selling prices from an informational automotive Web site to the member-only price offered by dealer participating in the Costco Auto Program for the same makes and models of vehicles between 12/06 and 11/07. ©/© All rights reserved.
When the going gets tough

Two smart money moves during uncertain times

By Tim Talevich

RISING GAS PRICES, a troubled housing market, increasing costs for groceries, volatility in the stock market—these all spell tough economic times. In response, you can stretch your dollar with commonsense moves such as carpooling or taking public transit and reducing spending on nonessentials.

Other smart money moves are improving your credit score and optimizing your savings account—areas where Costco provides tools that can help. Here’s a look.

Monitoring your credit score

The best possible credit score is especially important in tight economic times. A high score can help you get a better rate on a loan—or qualify for certain loans that aren’t available to consumers with lower scores. In fact, in terms of a home loan, a good credit score may be necessary to even begin discussions with a lender.

In the wake of the home credit crisis, easy loans are a thing of the past, advises Costco member Tom Kelly, an author and syndicated columnist specializing in second homes (www.tomkelly.com). “Borrowers are being more scrutinized than before,” says Kelly. “Lenders want to know the value of the home and that the borrower is solid.”

Costco offers the Credit Reports, Scores & Monitoring program through IdentityGuard® to help members understand their credit. With this program, you can receive a monthly credit report showing data from the big three credit bureaus: Equifax, Experian and TransUnion.

Keeping on top of your credit reports is important for two reasons: You can find and correct mistakes (which aren’t uncommon), and you can detect unauthorized transactions that might suggest fraud.

Even small improvements in your credit score can have a huge financial impact, says Joe Vacca of Intersections Inc., the provider of IdentityGuard. For example, a difference of a quarter or a half percent on an interest rate could equate to $50,000 or $80,000 over the life of a typical 30-year loan.

Another helpful feature in the program is the Credit Analyzer tool. It enables you to create “what if” scenarios to see how decisions could affect your credit.

“When you’re looking at making payments or making decisions in a tough market, the Credit Analyzer can tell you the best way to apply those payments, as well as what things on your credit report to review to help you manage your credit score,” says Vacca.

The Credit Reports, Scores & Monitoring program features other tools to fight identity theft, including an insurance policy to reimburse victims for certain expenses (see “The Costco Connection”).

Earning higher interest on savings

In times of volatility in the stock and bond market, a smart move is to find some shelter from the storm.

One option worth considering in these times is a money market account (MMA). These accounts earn interest that usually outperforms the typical bank savings account. And they are FDIC insured, so you can rest assured your money is secure.

Costco offers an MMA through Capital One at an exclusive rate (see chart). Here’s how the account works.

▪ It’s easy to open an MMA at costco.com or by phone (see “Connecting” at lower left). You can get started with as little as $1,000.

▪ You can add to it at any time, and making a withdrawal is as easy as writing a check, transferring money to an existing bank account or taking money out of an ATM. As with most MMAs, there are limits to how many withdrawals you can make in a month.

Unlike some investments, the Capital One MMA is FDIC insured to at least $100,000 per depositor.

“With no fees, a superior exclusive rate for Costco members and flexible options to access your money, the Capital One MMA is a great place to save your money,” says Capital One Direct Banking representative Carl Lonnberg. “Especially at times when returns from the stock market are so unpredictable.”

Regardless of the economic climate, MMAs represent a safe place to stash your cash with excellent interest and easy access.

Costco offers an MMA through Capital One (USA), N.A., and Capital One, N.A., members FDIC.

*As of 05/21/08, if the daily balance of the Capital One MMA was $100 or more, the APY was 3.20 percent; if not, the APY was 0.00 percent. Minimum initial deposit amount is $1,000. Terms and conditions of this offer may change at any time. Rates are variable and may change at any time. Withdrawal limits apply © 2008 Capital One. Capital One is a federally registered service mark. All rights reserved.

Competitor comparison information pulled from www.wells Fargo.com, www.usbank.com and www.wachovia.com as of 05/21/08 using New York MMA rates. Rates assume $5,000 account balance. The above non-Capital One service marks are owned by each respective entity. All rights reserved. Capital One Direct Banking MMAs are offered by Capital One (USA), N.A., and Capital One, N.A., members FDIC.

Smarter savings

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<tr>
<th>Capital One MMA</th>
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<th>Wells Fargo® MMA</th>
<th>Wachovia® High Performance MMA</th>
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WHILE MOST OF US may never visit the remote Amazon, we now can enjoy one of the nutritious fruits from that lush region, acai (pronounced “ah-sigh-ee”) berries, in Kirkland Signature™ by Bolthouse Acai Blueberry Juice. Considered one of the healthiest fruits on the planet, acai berries are harvested directly from the Amazon rain forest. This delicious juice blend, which combines the powerful antioxidant properties of acai berries and blueberries, can be served by itself, as a base in smoothies or as a mixer.

Both Costco and its partner Bolthouse strongly support harvesting practices that preserve the rain forest. The villagers, who are also the farmers of this berry, are able to harvest the berries from the forests’ palm trees. “The harvesting of this fruit has created income for the villagers to build schools and child-care centers and have access to medical facilities,” says Costco buyer Teresa Noonan. Item #272506 Warehouse only.
A. Audiovox Portable DVD Player
This portable LCD DVD player plays standard DVD-, MP3- and CD-based media. Features include 9" viewing screen, rechargeable battery for playback up to three hours, credit-card-size remote control, two stereo headsets, carrying bag that doubles as a headrest mounting kit and AC and DC car adapters. Item #991998 Warehouse only.

B. International Cinema DVD Collection
This collection of acclaimed foreign films includes *A Very Long Engagement*, starring Audrey Tautou and directed by Jean-Pierre Jeunet; *Day for Night*, directed by François Truffaut; art-house favorite *Gloomy Sunday*, directed by Rolf Schübel; and *The Damned* and *Death in Venice*, directed by Luchino Visconti. Item #311163 Warehouse only.

C. Shark Steam Mop
Lightweight and featuring an ergonomic design, this steam mop sanitizes all sealed hardwood floor surfaces with plain tap water—no chemicals. Steam is ready in 30 seconds. Includes five steam-activated microfiber pads. Item #269653 Warehouse only.

D. Salmon Bait-Cast Package
The salmon bait-cast package is a serious tool for avid salmon anglers. The rod, designed by Pacific Northwest salmon expert Buzz Ramsey, has proven itself on such rivers as the Columbia and Kenai. It is matched to the Swedish-designed Abu Garcia Ambassadeur Record bait-cast reel, to help you land your next record. Item #11278161 costco.com only.

E. Pelican Energy DLX Fade Motor Pedal Boat
The Energy DLX Pedal Boat offers fun and the freedom to enjoy the outdoors. Features include a RAM-X™ hull, 30-pound thrust motor, adjustable seat backs, built-in cooler/storage and a canopy to shield passengers from the sun. Item #154664 costco.com only.

F. Alba Hawaiian Body-Care Set
Tropical fruit and flower extracts, nourishing nut oils and certified-organic aloe vera are blended together to create exotic body-care and spa treatments that reflect the beauty and vitality of the Hawaiian Islands. Item #249640 Warehouse only.

G. MemoryStor Scrapbook Paper Cart
Perfect for the home or office, this paper cart features 15 oversized drawers in a lightweight, chrome-plated steel rack with swivel casters that let it glide easily into small places. Nameplate drawer-pulls allow quick identification. Item #278368 Warehouse only.

H. Dollhouse Bookshelf with Rolling Storage Bin
This hand-painted dollhouse bookshelf features three open shelves to showcase favorite books and collectibles as well as an additional rolling bin for extra storage. The colorfully painted storage bin easily slides out for safe and immediate access to games and toys while hiding any unwanted clutter. Bookshelf dimensions: 25.9” W x 12.9” D x 61” H. Item #254676 Warehouse and costco.com.

Kirkland Signature Chinet Red Cups
OUTDOOR SUMMER entertaining means Red Cups are on the shopping list. The new 18-ounce Kirkland Signature Chinet Red Cups feature an extra-strong, heavyweight design that is unique to Costco. “The biggest value is the dramatic improvement in strength versus all other cups on the market,” says Russ Decaire, assistant general merchandise manager. “We have engineered extra strength into the top half of the cup, where people grab and hold it, without adding any additional plastic, and we’ve lowered the price.” Sold in a 240-count pack. Item #277354 Warehouse only.

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Click here for a list of special events by region.

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Jul 11–20 Assorted sterling silver and gemstone jewelry
Anchorage II
Jul 25–Aug 3 Assorted sterling silver and gemstone jewelry

IDAHO
Boise
Jul 5–13 Bentwood oak and cherry furniture
Jul 24–Aug 3 Amanda apparel

MONTANA
Missoula
Jul 18–27 Rustic log furniture

OREGON
Aloha
Jul 17–27 Caldera spas
Bend
Jul 29–Aug 10 Double Decor assorted art
Clackamas
Jul 14–27 Double Decor assorted art
Jul 18–27 Little Giant ladders

WASHINGTON
Aurora Village
Jul 5–13 Roland digital pianos
Jul 11–20 Little Giant ladders
Jul 14–27 Double Decor assorted art
Jul 18–27 Sundance spas
Bellingham
Jul 18–27 Pianos
Costco Home (Kirkland)
Jul 1–Aug 1 Exterior and interior doors
Jul 1–Aug 1 Jeld-wen windows
Jul 7–Aug 3 Mission-style furniture
East Wenatchee
Jul 18–27 Custom log furniture
Everett
Jul 7–20 Double Decor assorted art
Federal Way
Jul 18–27 Bedroom and occasional furniture
Fife Business Center
Jul 10–11 Business Expo (open to all members)
Gig Harbor
Jul 11–20 Little Giant ladders
Jul 18–27 Bronze and resin statues and fountains
Jul 25–Aug 3 Sundance Art assorted art

KENNEWICK
Jul 10–19 Food rotation systems
Kirkland
Jul 5–13 Sundance spas
Jul 18–27 Custom-upholstered furniture
Lacey
Jul 25–Aug 3 Rustic log furniture
Marysville
Jul 11–20 Pothia comfort footwear
Puyallup
Jul 25–Aug 3 Little Giant ladders
Spokane
Jul 5–13 Custom log furniture
N Spokane
Jul 5–13 Solid wood bedroom and office furniture
Tacoma
Jul 5–13 Pianos
Tumwater
Jul 5–15 Custom-upholstered furniture
Jul 18–27 Pothia comfort footwear
Jul 25–Aug 3 Women’s apparel

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Update

Current news for Costco members

To learn more about the complete suite of Costco services, click on the "Services" link at costco.com or call 1-800-220-6000.

The Costco Connection

Practical Tip

Payment terminal versus processing software

MERCHANTS PROCESSING credit-card transactions through Costco provider Elavon (formerly NOVA) using older dial-up terminals should consider the benefits of upgrading to newer hardware or software alternatives that provide greater security and speed.

Hardware upgrade. If your business requires quick turnaround at the point of sale, replacing a slow dial-up terminal with an Internet protocol (IP) terminal can shave precious seconds off your transaction times. This alternative also yields additional savings by eliminating the need for a phone line dedicated to the dial-up terminal.

Software approach. Elavon’s latest payment software—VirtualMerchant—delivers the features and functionality of a terminal through your existing computer, using an Internet connection to process transactions securely and quickly. It supports credit-card, debit-card, electronic-check and gift-card processing. This hosted solution resides safely behind Elavon’s firewall, minimizing your security liability, and is kept up-to-date automatically.

To inquire about Costco’s credit card processing program through Elavon and to learn more about their equipment or software solutions, call toll-free 1-888-337-1883 and refer to promotional code 83117.

Practical Tip

Federal rate cuts and home loans

THE FEDERAL Reserve has cut the federal funds rate several times over the past few months. Here are three ways the Federal Reserve rate cuts might affect home loans.

1. Interest rates on home equity lines of credit could drop.
2. Some borrowers with adjustable-rate mortgages (ARMs) could gain relief.
3. Home mortgage rates could potentially drop.

Interest rates for mortgages are typically tied to the yield on 10-year Treasury notes, not the federal funds rate. But Treasury notes tend to follow the same direction as the federal funds rate.

Service Update

Phone service responds to demand

ACCESSLINE Communications has announced several system enhancements for its new digital phone service for small businesses, including:

- Increased line capacity from two to eight lines
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- Each phone can be dialed directly—a rarely found feature in a small phone system.

For more information, visit costco.com and enter “smart phone” in the search box, or call toll-free 1-877-917-3419.
Tanks for the memories

JUST BECAUSE TANKS of various kinds—water, gas, oil—are often, by necessity, erected in high-visibility areas, there’s no law that says they have to be eyesores. In fact, many communities require that they be camouflaged. That’s where Costco members Rod and Donna Hennig come in. Their Renton, Washington, company, MuralDesign.com, turns those ugly blobs into works of art. Since starting in 1986, they’ve adorned more than 60 tanks, the largest being a 10-million-gallon giant in Anchorage that is 30 feet high and 660 feet around. In addition to earning a living at it, the Hennigs get satisfaction knowing that, as Rod Hennig says, “People driving by a 100-foot-plus water tower can see our work for years to come.”—Steve Fisher

A vision for success

AFTER LOSING TWO PAIRS of $400 eyeglasses in six months, and observing that his mother-in-law was also losing her glasses everywhere she went, Costco member Peter Jones was struck by inspiration.

Jones, a business consultant in Newton, Massachusetts, believed that people who found a pair of glasses would probably return them if only they could figure out whose they were. For the next year he worked on developing a way to do just that, and Eyeglass Rescue (www.eyeglassrescue.com) was born.

In 2004, Eyeglass Rescue received its first patent. In addition to attaching the heat-shrink tags, the user registers contact information online or by phone. Currently, the program boasts more than 25,000 subscribers and has reunited more than 4,000 pairs of glasses with their owners.

As for the finders, if altruism isn’t enough, they are rewarded with a thank-you package of merchandise.—SF

A woman with a purpose

THE IDEA OF DIASPORA—a movement of a people from their homeland—has always intrigued Celeste Bateman.

As a former supervisor of cultural affairs for the city of Newark, New Jersey, and executive director of the Newark Arts Council, she also loved bringing quality performances to audiences and helping performers with their careers.

In the spring of 2005 Bateman combined her experience with her interests to form Nia Network (www.nianetwork.com), a select roster of 23 artists, musicians, dancers, historians, writers and motivational speakers.

Nia is the Swahili word for purpose, and the longtime Union, New Jersey, Costco member purposely chose artists she had worked with in the past whose artistic work pertains to the African diaspora.

Through Nia Network’s parent company, Celeste Bateman & Associates, clients are booked for up to 120 performances annually at colleges, universities, performing arts centers, corporations, festivals, churches, fairs and schools both nationally and internationally.

“They promote what is good and positive about African, Caribbean and African-American culture, history and heritage,” Bateman says. “Most of my clients are also teachers who just happen to be performers as well; the commonality between all of them is that they are artists.”

—Shana McNally

We want to hear from you

IF YOU HAVE a note, photo or story to share (it should be about Costco or Costco members in some way), you can send it to “The Member Connection,” The Costco Connection, P.O. Box 34088, Seattle, WA 98124-1088, or e-mail to connection@costco.com with “The Member Connection” in the subject line. Submissions cannot be acknowledged or returned.
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