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Black Friday sees red; Williston store sets sales record

*By Dan McLean
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Sales records were broken at the SuperStore in Williston on Friday, the unofficial start of the holiday shopping season, but the number of shoppers began to fade throughout the weekend.

<http://www.burlingtonfreepress.com/apps/pbcs.dll/gallery?Avis=BT&Dato=20081201&Kategori=LIVING02&Lopenr=812010801&Ref=PH>">• **Gallery:** Black Friday shoppers head to stores

"We had a very good Black Friday," said John Gunther, vice president of the electronics division at the SuperStore.

A sales records was set Friday, he said, adding, "That was heartening." Most of the sales were flat-screen televisions and high-definition DVD players. Sales figures for the store's other departments were not available.

"There was a drop-off on Saturday and Sunday, but that was nothing new," Gunther said.

National consumer confidence and retail sales hit their lowest points in roughly four decades in October. Last week, several Vermonters said in interviews that they planned to cutback on holiday shopping this year, given the woeful economy.

Gunther said he had "restrained optimism" for Friday's sales figures. "We didn't know what to expect with the economy the way it is. We were very pleased with what we saw," he said.

Gunther said he expects sales to slow during the weekdays, but increase during the weekends.

Shoppers also flocked to local malls such as University Mall in South Burlington, said Tasha Wallis, executive director of the Vermont Retail Association.

"They were certainly very happy with how Black Friday was going. They had a significant turnout," she said.

Wallis said there was likely "some pent-up demand" because shoppers postponed making purchases in October. Retailers also did a "really terrific" job discounting merchandise, she said.

"People were really in search of bargains," Wallis said.

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