

A party to write home about

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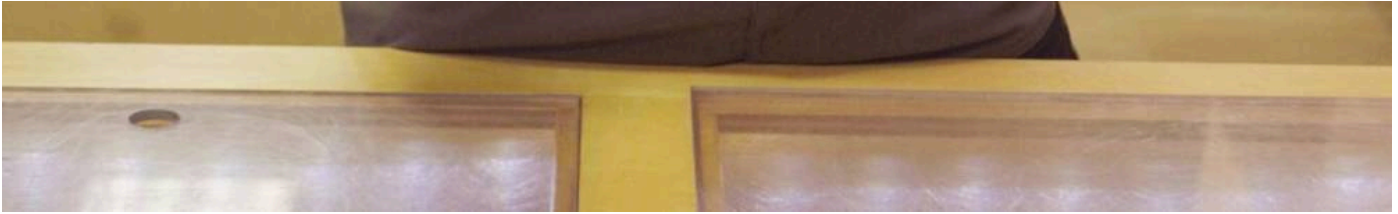
Downtown Exchange District

U.N. Luggage sits along the beautiful curve of McDermot Avenue East, an Exchange District business that specializes in travel luggage, briefcases, backpacks — and an ever-expanding collection of premium pens. To celebrate the end of the year, U.N. Luggage is hosting an evening ‘pen party’ on Thursday, Dec. 11, featuring discounts and giveaways.

A promotional event for pen enthusiasts, launched over 15 years ago, has become one of U.N. Luggage’s busiest days of the year. Co-owner Jon Thiessen said they thought it would be fun to have one night every year dedicated to pens.

“How do you set yourself apart as more than a store? It’s a little community, (pens) are pretty niche. So, we thought it would be fun to basically have one night a year where we basically have a pen promotion,” Thiessen said, recalling the inspiration for the event.





One of the first pen parties happened in 2010, around the 65th anniversary of the business being incorporated, Thiessen recalled. He was initially encouraged by Michael Pons, the Lamy pens distributor in Canada, who brought in Italian pens and other high-end brands U.N. Luggage didn't usually carry.

"That would be key, because it is fun to have something to show off that isn't normally in the store," Thiessen said.

U.N. Luggage didn't initially carry high-end and luxury pens. It started when the business, which has been located in the Exchange District since 1989, brought in Mont Blanc wallets and briefcases about 20 years ago, Thiessen said. Mont Blanc wanted to have its pens sold, too.

"We ended up selling far more Mont Blanc pens than wallets or briefcases, and that a sort of led us to the pen business," Thiessen said.

This year's pen party will be a classic, Christmas-style event. Pens will be laid out across the store in open display cases and spread atop tables. It will include giveaways and a 20 per cent discount on all pens, inks, and notebooks. Thiessen said he expects to see hundreds of people come in and out throughout the evening, based on previous events.

"It's a really busy atmosphere, you'll be bouncing around. Some customers want to talk about pens for half an hour," Thiessen said.

Rylee Nykyforak, a sales manager, has been working at U.N. Luggage for three years.

"It's a good social event; it's very hectic, chatty, and it brings in all kinds of different people," Nykyforak said.

Nykyforak said she thinks it's great to have such events happening in the evening, so people can make a night of it. She hopes it will bring attention to other businesses in the Exchange.

Nykyforak knew nothing about pens before working at U.N. Luggage and had to learn all about them to "be up-to-par," with pen collectors. Despite being shocked by how expensive some pens can be, her favourite part of the process was learning about all the different kinds of ink.

Her favourite pen is the sleek, magnetic capped Diplomat Viper Guilloche fountain pen, which runs at about \$175.

"It's got an interesting nib on it, and the colour is stunning," Nykyforak said.

Thiessen, who doesn't typically carry a briefcase or wear shirts with pockets, said his favourite pen is the Lamy Pico ballpoint, which fits in front pants pockets.

"It's small enough to sit in your pocket but expands to full length. So, if you need to write down a note quickly ... you're not scrambling around trying to find something to write with," Thiessen said.