Hands On
TIPS, TRENDS AND TACTICS FOR THE SAVVY RETAILER

First Hand Account
WHAT’S BLACK AND WHITE AND READ ALL OVER?

If a florist told you that four local newspapers were giving him a guaranteed 15 column inches of prime space each week, the freedom to say basically whatever he wanted about flowers and even paying him to do so, you’d think he was joking, right?

Well, you’d be right, in the case of Brian Wheat who is joking his way onto page 2 of four weekly papers with the adventures of “The Flower Guy,” his cartoon and Lafayette Florist’s newest spokesperson, er, spokespetal.

The cartoon is bringing some serious publicity to the shop — just as a sketchy economy was putting a squeeze on traditional advertising dollars. “With the weakened economy, we had to come up with a way to keep our name visible — without spending money,” says Lori Wheat, the shop’s marketing and merchandising director and the illustrator’s wife. “This keeps flowers and Lafayette Florist top of mind, without costing us a dime!”

The idea came to Brian, the shop’s CEO, when reading the local newspaper in Lafayette, Co., and wondering what could rival the splash of a full-color ad. An illustrator since he could clutch a crayon, Brian “thought it might be interesting to do a cartoon on flowers,” Lori says.

In 2006, about half of the florists in SAF’s post-holiday survey reported increased sales for Christmas, and a little more than a third said sales were down. In 2007, those proportions were almost reversed. A third of florists reported increases and half (49 percent) reported decreases.

SOURCE: SAF’s Post-holiday online survey of retail florists. Based on 347 responses (response rate = 10.7 percent).