

Your one stop shop for a day at the beach

Pessano's Variety Store offers up toys, games, sunscreen and plenty more

By **DANA EISELEN**
The Sure Guide

OCEAN CITY - It is a perfect beach day. The sun is shining, the air is hot, the sky is blue, the winds are light and the waves are starting to pick up. Checklist: Beach chairs, umbrellas, boogie boards, sunglasses, sun block, Frisbee, cooler.

Pessano's Variety Store on the corner of Third and Atlantic Avenue offers a wide selection of beach supplies. If the brightly striped red and white awnings and waving blue and red flags outside don't grab your attention, the huge variety of quality merchandise inside should. From the most basic beach chair to the deluxe model, boogie boards for tikes to teens and an entire wall of magazines and beach reads, Pessano's makes it easy to stock up on beach gear in one stop.

"I come here a couple times a year before the grandkids get here. It's a fun store," said Sue Senne of Ocean City.

The store is a child's paradise filled with toys. There are magic tricks, water balloons, army men, coloring books, candy and travel editions of classic games like Sorry and Connect Four. Walls are lined with sports equipment, perfect for a game at the beach or the



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Pessano's Variety Store on the corner of Third Street and Atlantic Avenue offers a myriad of merchandise for a day at the beach or a fun evening at home. The store has been in town since 1946.

front yard. Paddle ball, whiffle bats and balls, Frisbees, lacrosse sticks, horseshoes, Nerf footballs and basketballs are in stock at all times.

"We just bought two shovels to dig with at the beach and some gun caps," said a beaming 10-year-old Bryson Desrosiers of Somers Point.

The store boasts its ability to carry unique novelty items not usually carried by large chain stores, like a magnetic paper doll-making kit and a football that has "Ocean City printed on it." Water-lovers appreciate the wide-selection of boogie boards, skim boards, rash guards and rafts.

If it seems like you are going to need help carting your equipment to the beach, Pessano's has a solution. The store rents wagons daily and weekly.

Just in case you forgot to bring toothpaste or deodorant with you to the shore, Pessano's has an entire aisle devoted to personal care items. There is a huge selection of sunscreens and tanning aids.

Don't leave the store without a few Ocean City souvenirs either!

Interestingly, when the family store opened in 1946, a four-ounce bottle of Coppertone sun block was \$1.50. It now

Please see Pessano's, page 44



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Pessano's Variety Store owner Andrew Pessano with employees Cara Artuso, Bakytkul Tattimbekova and Dylan McNally.

Pessano's



Special to The Sure Guide

Joseph Pessano, a pharmacist from Philadelphia, opened Pessano's in 1946. It has gone through transformations since the beginning, but is still a popular shop in town.

Continued from page 44

"It was an opportunity I didn't want to pass up on. My wife, who was then my girlfriend, told me to give it a shot," said Andrew Pessano, owner of Pessano's.

For two years, Andrew continued working at an accounting firm as a network administrator in Center City Philadelphia. After taking a winter off to remodel the store, Andrew quit his job in Center City and decided to focus all his energy on the business.

"I realized I liked the winters off. This decision gave me more time to focus on the business," said Andrew Pessano. "I am thinking about expansion in the next

few years and maybe a new location."

Andrew has transformed the store into the novelty and beach supplies store it is today.

"I'm happy where I'm at. I like seeing the same faces each year," he said. "Kids who came in here wearing diapers now come in tearing things up."

Enjoy the beautiful beach day and don't forget the sunscreen!

Pessano's Variety Store is located at the corner of Third and Atlantic Avenue and can be reached at 399-1889.

Pessano's

Continued from page 43

costs over \$6.

Pessano's has specialized in being "your everything store for the shore" since its establishment in 1946. What was Ocean City like in 1946? There was no Garden State Parkway or Ninth Street Bridge, Wonderland Pier wasn't dreamed of, there wasn't a golf course, a female council woman was a vision of the future and beach tags were non-existent. Back then, families usually vacationed for the entire season, the women would stay in town with their children and the fathers would come to the shore on the weekends when they were off work.

Joseph Pessano, a pharmacist from Philadelphia, had a summer home in Margate and in 1946 he opened Pessano's Variety Store at the corner of Third and Atlantic Avenue. In the early years it was primarily a pharmacy and card store. It also had a deli and soda fountain. Pessano's mostly stocked personal care items and greeting cards. Pessano and his wife raised their family

at their home located above the corner store.

The store was successful and by 1958, two more locations were opened at 11th and 13th Streets on the Boardwalk to cater to beachgoers. In 1963 it was time to pass the family business down to Joseph Pessano's son, David. David wasn't a pharmacist and could only sell over-the-counter medicines, so he stocked the stores with beach equipment instead. To update the store and make room for more merchandise, the soda fountain and deli were also removed. David's family lived on top of the store just like his father's had. In fact, David and his wife continue to live above the store today. David streamlined the business and sold the two Boardwalk stores in 1985. By 2000 it was time for him to retire. Although David's son Andrew never showed interest in the family business while growing up, the recent LaSalle University graduate decided to buy it off his father.

Please see Pessano's, page 45