



GWINN DAVIS / Staff

Mary Anne Mahoney, front, and Leanne Edwards get a jump on their Christmas shopping at Garden Ridge as cashier Spenser Keeling checks them out. Garden Ridge on Woodruff Road opened its doors for shoppers on Thanksgiving Day.

Shoppers expected in record numbers

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138 million people forecast to shop this weekend

By **Gerogea Kovanis**
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Discounted laptops, e-readers and flat-screen TVs are expected to lure a record number of shoppers to stores on Black Friday.

"This year, Black Friday will surpass every Black Friday in the history of America," said Britt Beemer, founder of America's

Research Group, based near Charleston, S.C.

Up to 138 million people plan to shop Black Friday weekend — Friday, Saturday and Sunday — compared with 134 million last year, according to the national Retail Federation, a Washington, D.C.-based trade association.

The biggest draw, Beemer predicts, will be flat-screen TVs priced for less than \$499.

Cassandra Smith will pitch her tent about midnight Friday outside of the Target in Northville, Mich.

Equipped with a DVD player and a portable heater, the tent is where she and her sister and cousin will wait until the store opens at 4 a.m. Friday.

"We usually go, like, maybe an hour-and-a-half to two hours before open-

ing," says Smith, 32, of Livonia, Mich. "We're still always far back in line. We thought this might be a better idea. We love Target."

She also loves the flat-screen TV that's going to be on sale.

Black Friday — the day after Thanksgiving and the traditional start of the holiday shopping season

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— is about bargain hunting, fun and tradition.

"Just to be out in the crowd, the hustle and bustle of it," said Smith, who expects to get the majority of her holiday shopping done on Friday. "I didn't get

the TV last year; it was still fun."

Experts predict record numbers of Black Friday shoppers this year, many of them lured by deals on flat-screen TVs and others intrigued by ads that have been leaked to Internet sites for weeks.

The International Council of Shopping Centers, which is based in New York and is the global trade asso-

ciation for shopping malls, said 31 percent of households plan to shop on Black Friday this year, compared with 26 percent in 2009.

And about 138 million people plan to shop Black Friday weekend, compared with 134 million last year, according to the National Retail Federation, a Washington, D.C.-based trade association.