

THINGS TO DO / [FASHION AND SHOPPING](#)

Squishmallows, slime and more toys trending at Long Island stores



Sadie Bernius, 9, of Bayport, plays with a Squishmallow while shopping with her mom at Learning Express Toys & Gifts in Port Washington, Tuesday, July 25, 2023. Credit: Danielle Silverman

By Mary Elizabeth Andriotis

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Some of the hottest commodities at Long Island stores are items that shoppers have spotted first on social media. And exactly what that have-to-have-it item is varies per age group — just ask a 10-year-old if they're a fan of Squishmallows, soft plush toys that come in dozens of variations.

Highly coveted merchandise this summer (what trends is cyclical, and ever-changing) includes Water Wigglers (liquid-filled sensory toys), Shhhandals (flexible slide sandals), slime, reusable water bottles, Pokemon cards and paraphernalia and freeze-dried candy, the latter of which has 2.9 billion hits on TikTok alone.

Local shops are turning out buzzworthy item displays with what's trending and some newcomers, like Showcase in Walt Whitman Shops which opened this spring, are entering the scene with a product base devoted entirely to the concept of selling trending products. A central table in the shop marked with fire emoji reads "this week's hot trends," drawing in shoppers with a "what's here today, just might be gone tomorrow" mentality.

Lauren Rauchbauer, 28, of Astoria says she travels from Queens to the store in Huntington Station to find the Squishmallows her children *have* to have. They “love the Squishmallow wall” inside Showcase, she adds.

As a mother, Shiri Lavi, 39, says she finds similar success shopping buzzy products at Learning Express in Port Washington, where she seeks out such items as perfect party favors and gifts. Lavi, of Port Washington, adds she recently bought for her daughters “tons of great games and workbooks for a flight to keep them occupied.”

Below, find a list of items that Long Island store managers and owners say are currently top-selling — and where to find them.

Squishmallows



Khaleese Zamora, 2, looks at Squishmallows at Showcase at Walt Whitman Shops in Huntington Station, July 23. Credit: Linda Rosier

[Squishmallows](#) by Jazwares are “a big hot item” at Learning Express, says Emily Reilly, marketing specialist for the brand.

Here, customers can expect to find them for anywhere from \$9.99 to \$89.99, depending on rarity and size, with the largest and most expensive measuring 24 inches. In stock is the hard-to-find Snorlax, a Pokémon character. The stuffed toys are also available in s'mores, animals and fruit shapes at big-box retailers.

“We get new Squishmallows that come in periodically,” Reilly says. For the popular ones, “we are always posting on social media when they’re coming in so that people have a chance to get it.”

What it costs: \$9.99 and up

Water Wigglers

Top Trenz, an online retailer based in Ronkonkoma, sells a variety of [Water Wigglers](#), which allow kids to swish liquid around themed tubelike variations decorated with safari animal imagery, holiday patterns, sea creatures and more.

What it costs: \$9 to \$11

Freeze-dried candy

Enlarged, often crunchy versions of popular candy can be created by freeze-drying treats, and that's exactly what social media users are eating up online. For those who don't have the equipment at home to make it happen, stores have begun selling their own puffed-up offerings. At FYE, with locations in the Smith Haven and South Shore malls, customers of all ages can partake in the trend. Offerings include taffy bombs, sour alien worms, gummy bears, lil' mints and cookie dough bombs.

Jude Kim, 17, of Centerport says, "I'm really happy with the new trend of the freeze dried candies. It melts in your mouth and I've never had anything like it before."

What it costs: \$9.99 to \$14.99

Slime



Sadie Bernius, 9, of Bayport shops with her mom at Learning Express in Port Washington on July 25. Credit: Danielle Silverman

The messy, visually appealing toy comes in many iterations and colors, from neon-themed to food-shaped. [Dope Slime](#), one of the many varieties, often resembles ice cream or bubble gum.

What it costs: \$14.99 to \$16.99

Shhhandals

For a trendy take on those oversized pool sliders you've most likely seen this summer, [Shhhandals](#) are a comfortable and affordable option. Showcase charges \$4.99 and up for the sought-after shoe, which is made of a compression material that allows Shhhandals to take on the shape of your foot. The unisex footwear is waterproof, anti-slip, anti-chafe and comes in five sizes and four colors: white, black, pink and yellow.

What it costs: \$4.99

4 SPOTS FOR TRENDING MERCH

- **Showcase at Walt Whitman Shops**, 160 Walt Whitman Rd., Huntington Station, 631-944-8211; ca.shopatshowcase.com
- **Learning Express**, 61 Shore Rd., Port Washington, 516-266-1030; learningexpress.com
- **Top Trezz**, based in Ronkonkoma, toptrezz.com
- **FYE**, 550 Smith Haven Mall, Lake Grove, 631-724-3268 and South Shore Mall, 1701 Sunrise Hwy., Bay Shore, 631-954-5104; fye.com

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