

# Dover Newszap!

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## Film's marketing an act of faith in Downstate Delaware

*By Bill Potter, Delaware State News*

DOVER - The drive-through windows at Downstate fast food restaurants won't be passing out "The Passion of the Christ" kids meals with a line of collectible action figures any time soon.

While the marketing plans of many movies come with a blitz of cuddly toys, bright colored plastic cars or decoder rings, that won't be the case with the film and its merchandising.

"We create products for people to share and communicate their faith," said Dwight Robinson, a spokesman for Bob Siemon Designs in Santa Anna, Calif.

The company is the major supplier of the movie's licensed marketing, primarily through Christian bookstores, Mr. Robinson said.

In addition to marketing its own "The Passion of the Christ" jewelry, the firm promotes the movie's companion book "The Passion," an assortment of coffee mugs and other items.

Only five locations Downstate have agreements to sell the film's licensed products.

While shopping at one of the licensed stores, The Branch in Greentree Village Shopping Center in Dover, Karen Marble thumbed the pages of "The Passion" Thursday morning.

The book had been sitting on a display table with other Christian merchandise.

As she flipped the photo-filled pages, Ms. Marble's eyes widened and filled with tears and her hands began to shake.

She looked at photos depicting a blood-covered Christ lying lifeless in the arms of his mother Mary.



**Teri Kennedy, a sales clerk at The Branch in Dover's Greentree Village Shopping Center, organizes a display dealing with "The Passion of the Christ," including its companion book "The Passion." The store is one of five locations Downstate with agreements to sell the film's licensed products.**

Delaware State News/Jason Minto

Mary's face was also covered in blood.

"This is a witness tool," Ms. Marble said. "This movie will change the hearts of people."

A born-again Christian and member of the Cavalry Assembly of God in Dover, Ms. Marble said the book's graphic pictures were a homage to Christ's sacrifice for mankind's salvation.

"The Passion," which costs about \$25, is hardbound and published by Tyndale House Publishers.

Also on the table were lapel pins, miniature crowns of thorns, books about Christ's last days, crucifixes and crosses.

Nanette Jones, the store's former owner and current consultant, said she hadn't seen a big surge of people buying movie-related items.

But she was expecting one after this weekend's showing of the film.

Even so, there were some early big sellers so far.

She said educational material for churches to better explain the story of the crucifixion and Jesus' resurrection were the hot items.

As one of only five Downstate locations carrying officially licensed products, shelves were being stocked and orders were being placed Thursday, she said.

Fans of the film can find or order the official selection of cross-shaped pewter lapel pins, coin-sized pocket reminders, a selection of crucifix necklaces on various length chains and a 2-inch replica of a crucifixion nail strung on a leather cord.

Ms. Jones said her store wasn't carrying the crucifixion nails yet and was waiting to gauge customer demand before ordering the items.

Other Downstate stores also said they would wait to see what the most popular items were.

Nationally, the most popular item has been a deck of cards called witnessing cards.

The deck of 25 cards, which sells for about \$6, reviews the importance of Jesus' death for Christians, Mr. Robinson said.

There are two reasons for marketing the movie's products through Christian outlets instead of large chain discount stores, he said.

"If you were to find the items at the grocery store, it would trivialize things," Mr. Robinson said. "They would become movie merchandise."

"And that's not what it is."

While only select stores can sell the licensed products, many are seeing increases in sales of other religious products.

Dwight Pate, owner of Emmanuel's Religious Gifts & Books etc. at 147 S. Governors Ave. in Dover, said he had been selling copies of the "Dolorous Passion" which was Mel Gibson's inspiration for making the film.

"Dolorous Passion," written by Anne Catherine Emmerich, relates the last hours of Christ's life as seen through her mystic visions and meditations, Mr. Pate said.

Staff writer Bill Potter can be reached at 741-8225 or [wpotter@newszap.com](mailto:wpotter@newszap.com)

Licensed stores

Downstate stores licensed to sell "The Passion of the Christ" products:

Amazing Grace  
240 E. DuPont Highway  
Millsboro  
947-2929

The Branch  
128 Greentree Dr.  
Dover  
674-4652

Ocean Pro Shop  
4060 DuPont Parkway  
Townsend  
378-8666

The Mustard Seed #1  
907 N. DuPont Blvd.  
Milford  
422-9808

The Mustard Seed #2  
168 Rehoboth Ave.  
Rehoboth Beach  
227-2623

Source: Bob Siemon Designs