

BUSINESS / FINANCE



Charlotte O'Banion, president of the Gift Basket Gallery in Westport, poses with one of her famous Easter Bunnies. This year, she will be donating \$1 for every basket sold to the Make A Wish charity, which grants last wishes to terminally ill children.

She's a real good egg

Gift store owner brings Easter joy to ailing kids

Easter has always been a special time for children. The Easter Bunny ... baskets ... colored eggs ... the excitement of hunting for treats behind every bush and berry tree.

Unfortunately, some children are too ill to delight in the discoveries of this spring holiday. For that reason Charlotte O'Banion of the Gift Basket Gallery in Westport will donate \$1 for every Easter basket sold to the Make A Wish Foundation.

This Easter, Ms. O'Banion and seven helpers will hop into the spirit of spring by donating life-size Easter Bunny suits to de-

liver baskets to children throughout Fairfield County. With orders being received up to two months in advance for their baskets, the Gift Basket Gallery hopes to put smiles on the faces of the terminally ill children of Make A Wish.

The Make A Wish Foundation is a nonprofit organization that grants last wishes for terminally ill children throughout Connecticut. Mary Burtasi, executive director, has high hopes for what Ms. O'Banion's efforts will do for the children of her organization.

Ms. O'Banion and her helpers get a special thrill from this spring holiday, she says. Each Easter Bunny spends about 15 minutes at each home delivery.

Ms. O'Banion says, "The kids love seeing a big white fluffy Easter Bunny hop in their front door delivering baskets, they are more afraid of Santa Claus."

While the kids hold on to the Easter Bunny, many parents and relatives videotape and take pictures of their children squealing with delight.

She says she gets a great pleasure looking through the photos parents have mailed her over the years and reading through the thank-you letters sent by the many families visited by her bunnies.

Although children receive most of the bunnies on Easter Sunday a few wives have had the Easter Bunny hop over to their working husbands. Ms. O'Banion said "I went to a grocery store, an office even a firehouse last year."

The first year in business Ms. O'Banion had two bunnies delivering her baskets, the second year she had four, the third year six, and this year she plans at least seven.