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Thousands of workers aid All-Star effort

BY PAULA MOORE
DENVER BUSINESS JOURNAL

People attending Sunday's NBA All-Star Game care mostly about the 10 starters on the court at the Pepsi Center.

But as many as 4,000 people are needed to stage the game and ancillary events for the All-Star weekend, Feb. 18-20.

The National Basketball Association has roughly 700 people here, including executives, office workers and television production staff. Some of the 200-plus employees at Kroenke Sports Enterprises LLC, owner of the game host Denver Nuggets, also are pitching in.

But the league mostly will use temporary help provided by Denver-area staffing companies.

Temp workers needed at All-Star events range from chauffeurs and costumed mascots for product sponsors to ticket takers and gift-bag stuffers. There also will be "human arrows," giving directions and so-called "seat sellers," who sit in unoccupied seats at the game to make sure TV viewers see a packed arena.

"We estimate before the weekend is over, 3,000 to 4,000 local people will have worked on this event, some even working just one six-hour jam session," said Ski Austin, the NBA's senior vice president of events and attractions. "Of those, there will probably be about 1,500 volunteers representing the city of Denver."

Many paid workers will come from eight Denver-area temp agencies, including Sunny Side Inc./Temp Side, The Boomer Group, Snelling Personnel Services, Act-1 Personnel Services and Snap! Staffing Services.

The league won't say how much the All-Star weekend will cost, but admits the tab will be millions of dollars. Security alone is expected to run \$1 million, with the NBA covering 11 per-

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Bring on the bling



KATHLEEN LAVINE / BUSINESS JOURNAL

Jeremy and Melissa Oster, along with Monica Weber, Melissa's sister, look over some of the newly arrived watches at Oster Jewelers in Cherry Creek North.

Oster Jewelers prepares for wealthy visitors

BY PAULA MOORE
DENVER BUSINESS JOURNAL

Cherry Creek jeweler Jeremy Oster won't be at the NBA All-Star Game. He'll be too busy staying open extra hours and making sure he has items preferred by clients who will be in Denver for the Feb. 20 game.

Oster and other employees of Oster Jewelers

often get on a plane and go to their customers, so they're enthusiastic about having so many clients able to come to them. The jeweler met many of those customers when he had a store in Aspen for a dozen years.

"The All-Star Game is like a traveling party of the hippest people in the nation — basketball

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FROM THE FRONT

DENVER BUSINESS JOURNAL

OSTER: Group of NBA wives among expected weekend shoppers



KATHLEEN LAVINE / BUSINESS JOURNAL

Monica Weber of Oster Jewelers, shows off some jewelry the store offers along with Melissa and Jeremy Oster. Denver Police Officer Keith Graves stands guard in the background. At right: A \$2.2 million necklace displayed at the store.

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legends and stars of today, other pro athletes and celebrities. ... This is our target market," Oster said. "With the game, we'll have our target market right here on our doorstep."

Oster Jewelers has been located on Steele Street in Denver's high-end Cherry Creek North retail district for two years. The watch and jewelry boutique specializes in cutting-edge, exclusive pieces.

The store already has gotten requests for private game-week viewings from a major client and a group of NBA wives.

Oster doesn't reveal customers' names, but All-Star Game participants include such notables as Shaquille O'Neal, LeBron James, Yao Ming and Tim Duncan. Retired basketball great Earvin "Magic" Johnson, rappers Usher and Sean "P. Diddy" Combs, as well as actor Will Smith also reportedly will be there.

To accommodate such clients, London-born Oster and his business partner, wife Melissa, have made sure to have favorite items on hand, including pink and blue diamonds. They ordered a limited-edition Parmigiani Bugatti driving watch — which retails for roughly \$200,000 — in time for the game.

"This watch took four years to develop, and it's close to being sold out," Jeremy Oster said. "It's unlike any other."

Oster Jewelers has beefed up security to ensure client privacy and safety.

The store also will be open Sunday, Feb. 20. It's usually closed Sundays.

"We're here to do whatever we can to help make our customers feel comfortable, and select jewelry they can't find anywhere else," Oster said.

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