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## More Than 1,250 Artisans and Entrepreneurs Submit Product Applications for Bon-Ton Stores First "Close to Home" Online Sourcing Fair

### Retailer Selects 400 for Final Consideration as it Expands "Close To Home" Shops and Increases Local Product Offerings

MILWAUKEE, June 14, 2017 /PRNewswire/ -- The Bon-Ton Stores, Inc. (NASDAQ: BONT), which operates Bon-Ton, Bergner's, Boston Store, Carson's, Elder-Beerman, Herberger's and Younkers stores, announced today that more than 1,250 artists, designers, makers, artisans and entrepreneurs submitted applications to the retailer's first Online Sourcing Fair. The number far exceeded expectations as Bon-Ton continues to cultivate local partnerships and source new and unique merchandise to sell in its expanding number of "Close to Home" shops.



Available in-store and online, "Close to Home" shops feature locally-sourced and themed products many of which are hand-crafted or upcycled. Bon-Ton launched its first Online Sourcing Fair in March as part of an ongoing effort to provide shoppers with a broader selection of local products by developing more relationships with area makers in communities they serve.

The retailer vetted applications in more than a dozen product categories with jewelry, artwork, home décor, kitchen and bar, apparel, and accessories topping the list. From jewelry made out of guitar strings in Iowa to wall décor in the shape of winter skis in Minnesota, submissions came from nearly two dozen states. Minnesota, Pennsylvania, Wisconsin, Illinois and New York fielded the most. Bon-Ton is considering about a third of those who applied and will start in late June to introduce new product selections in stores. Many of the makers have an active social media presence and an engaged following.

"Our regional merchandising teams were overwhelmed by the level of interest and depth of creativity and quality represented in the submissions," said Chad Stauffer, Executive Vice President, Chief Merchandising Officer for The Bon-Ton Stores, Inc. "With a growing base of local makers, customers can look forward to an elevated hometown shopping assortment with true local flavor in our "Close to Home" shops. We can't wait to showcase the new products from these talented new artisans in our stores."

Since opening in 45 stores in fall 2016, Bon-Ton has more than tripled the number of "Close to Home" shops to 148 in 14

states. "Close to Home" shops offer new items frequently and seasonally to provide shoppers with a fun, fresh and unique product selection. Including the latest round of makers selected, the "Close to Home" initiative has provided more than 340 small businesses with the opportunity to sell products in a major department store. The "Close to Home" initiative is part of Bon-Ton's broader commitment to support the communities where its stores are located.

The retailer will once again accept product submissions from applicants with established businesses and galleries for its next Online Sourcing Fair starting July 18, 2017 through August 31, 2017 at [closetohome.bonton.com](http://closetohome.bonton.com). Interested applicants must reside in one of Bon-Ton's [25 states](#) to apply for this exclusive opportunity. The retailer is especially interested in submissions from Idaho, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Utah and West Virginia.

**About The Bon-Ton Stores, Inc.**

The Bon-Ton Stores, Inc., with corporate headquarters in York, Pennsylvania and Milwaukee, Wisconsin, operates 261 stores, which includes 9 furniture galleries and four clearance centers, in 25 states in the Northeast, Midwest and upper Great Plains under the Bon-Ton, Bergner's, Boston Store, Carson's, Elder-Beerman, Herberger's and Younkers nameplates. The stores offer a broad assortment of national and private brand fashion apparel and accessories for women, men and children, as well as cosmetics and home furnishings. The Bon-Ton Stores, Inc. is an active and positive participant in the communities it serves. For further information, please visit [thebontonstoresinc.com](http://thebontonstoresinc.com) or the company's web site at [bonton.com](http://bonton.com). Join the conversation and be inspired by following Bon-Ton on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [Instagram](#), [Pinterest](#) and the fashion, beauty and lifestyle blog, [#LoveStyle](#).



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BON-TON *Bergner's Boston Store Carson's Elder-Beerman Herberger's Younkers*

To view the original version on PR Newswire, visit: <http://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/more-than-1250-artisans-and-entrepreneurs-submit-product-applications-for-bon-ton-stores-first-close-to-home-online-sourcing-fair-300473981.html>

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