o usher in 2018, our store created displays to warm the iciest of winter shoppers with inspiration found at local retailers.

Merchandising Assistant Cecelia Glackin-Hunt always starts her conceptualization process by selecting an inspiration to drive her decisions. Noting a heavy use of metallics during a recent merchandising field trip to independent retailers in Columbus’s hottest shopping district, she devised her concept to bring this display trend to our customers.

“I thought using found items and seasonally relevant items to introduce metallics to our displays would really draw people into the area and increase interest,” Cecelia says. “As I began to shop for supplies for props, the idea of silver as a core color would really accent our fixtures.”

She set about identifying the best locations to incorporate this theme. Cecelia first settled on our expansive slatwall, which is often challenging to merchandise. By using fixtures that butt against the wall, she was able to create interest as well as allow for capacity. On the second level, a cluster of tables was selected to bring dynamic attention to the rear of the store.

“The back of the store sometimes seems like an afterthought when it comes to merchandising,” notes Cecelia. “I wanted to give it something special and really drive shoppers there with an intentional and thoughtful display.”

After picking spots for building her displays, Cecelia and the store team selected the appropriate winter pieces to showcase. She brought in grays, creams, and whites as well as metallic puffer vests. She also introduced texture with fur, cozy, and sherpa pieces. The chosen items are among the more texturally and visually unique pieces we offer, lending the displays a curated feel.

Cecelia also took the opportunity to mix in shiny or color-appropriate items such as mugs, notebooks, pencil cases, and laptop stands to cross-merchandise for appeal to a wider audience.

“I think it’s important to cross-merchandise and select imprinted and nonimprinted merchandise when making displays,” explains Kimberly Worman, sales floor coordinator. “We have lots of customers from the surrounding downtown community that shop, and we need to provide them options, too.”

Finally, it was time to choose props to accentuate the display. Shopping for supplies to pull a display together on a budget is always an exciting challenge for Cecelia and the folks supporting her work. Craft stores often offer cost-effective options if the staff is up to crafting props in-house. Not only does that allow creative staffers to lend support to the process, but it’s also a way to foster greater engagement by showing team members how much thought is required to execute a vision.

“This was my first time working with Cecelia on a project like this,” says Mary Ellen Gauthier, newly promoted to sales floor coordinator. “It was awesome to see her process while shopping for supplies and how she was able to identify what would really work for the chosen theme.”

Cecelia selected crystal-studded sticks, a milk carafe, a tinsel boa, a window frame, metallic...
Shopping for supplies to pull a display together on a budget is always an exciting challenge.

party fans, and a sherpa scarf. She also used found wool, metallic beads, and cloth remnants to stuff clear bulbs. Adding leftover holiday snow was the final punctuation to bring the work together.

By incorporating these props with some handy modifications, the displays conveyed a clear celebratory winter message to ring in the New Year.

On the slatwall, Cecilia used symmetry to increase visual appeal. In addition, the clean feeling of the display and the thoughtful use of props make the pieces feel special and luxurious.

The table cluster on our second level presented hurdles, as the tables didn’t allow for height, limiting visibility that would encourage customers to venture to the back of the store.

“After I merchandised the table, I remembered seeing a rustic pallet on our shipping dock that would look great and add the height and visual interest I needed,” she says.

With the help of Cherokee Alexander, a general-merchandise work-study, and some gloves to avoid splinters, Cecelia added the pallet to the table, creating a trendy and relevant visual combination.

“It was awesome to bring something unexpected to the table,” enthuses Cherokee. “I also really like that I was asked to help on this whole project.”

Combining a few inexpensive props, some out-of-the-box thinking, and crafty hands, the team was able to infuse our products with glitz and industrial glam.

“I really like when we have the opportunity to do these projects,” says Allie Ferrell, a customer-care work-study. “We get to be creative and get to contribute in ways you can see. It’s like a party.”

In that same vein, the Columbus State Bookstore hopes to share the festivities and fun with our customers throughout the rest of 2018.

Luke Robson is retail sales and general merchandise supervisor for the Columbus State Bookstore, Columbus, OH, and past president of the Ohio Association of College Stores board.