

Rubber Match



Gennaro and George Zito of Rubber Match.

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George Zito says this is his "motivating year." The local futon icon, who's been in business for 35 years (and winning Best of honors for 18 in a row), is on a self-described "self-improvement kick." "I hadn't read a book in 20 years, now I'm reading again." His business is rebounding big-time, too. With the waterbed selection not what it once was ("Twenty years ago, there were 120 companies making them; now there are four," though he still serves that sloshy market readily), he's "into the mattress business heavily. And futons, of course." Zito, a longtime local celebrity due to the wild cable TV ads he did in the 1980s and 1990s, can give you a quick off-the-cuff seminar on what makes his futons better than the generic ones you'll find at the big-box stores, or being sold on street corners near the local colleges at the beginning of fall semester. "The best ones are made with cotton and heavy-density foam, plus there are these new featherbed futons. The generic ones, those black ones, are full of rags and don't even have a foam core." Zito knows his product, and he also knows New Haven. He recently told a customer he'd give her a break on one of his already bargain-priced mattresses if she'd bake him a sweet potato pie. Not only did she bring by that pie, she sent over two friends who spent \$700 on their own bed needs. "The futon market just keeps growing. Older people are buying a lot of them now." And when do you ever need to replace one? "When it gets too flat." That's something Rubber Match's business has never been.