



Submitted photo

Ladies tops and jeans are some of the most popular items sold in the Goodwill stores where shoppers can get tops priced as low as \$3.99.



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The Goodwill Store in Richland has an assortment of items, from household to clothing, that can save you money.

# CONSIDER RESALE STORES AND THRIFT SHOPS FOR EXTRA SAVINGS

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Somerset Magazine Correspondent

If holiday bills have left you with little extra money, one of the many resale shops in the area may be just for you.

Elizabeth Hagans the owner of It's New to You at Georgian Place, said her consignment shop of seven years does a steady business. "I really have a number of repeat buyers, she explained. "People like brand named clothing and that is usually what I sell. Children's clothing, such as those from the Gap or Ralph Lauren, sells well.

Hagan's sells children and women's junior sizes, along with maternity clothing in her store. The mother of five children ages 13 to one has a number of years in retail experience. She decided to open her shop after shopping for her family at consignment stores herself. "I sell clothing at 50 percent to 70 percent of the original prices but we always require the clothing to be in excellent shape."

Stated in the standard contract to sell she said is if it is not sold within 90 days then it is donated. "You have the option to have it donated or you can have it back. Most people just have

it donated."

Another favorite consignment shop in the area is Second Time Around, located along Route 30, near the Route 219 interchange.

Georgia Sheftic describes her 35 years in business as good ones, though at times, tough. "I worked on Wall Street before coming back to open the store," she said. "I think I was one of the first consignment stores in the area but I shopped consignment for years before that." Sheftic said she found the perfect location and opened up after taking a few business classes. "This is a tough business. You cannot just take a blouse in, put it on a hanger, and sell it. You are dealing with people who want to sell and customers who want to buy."

Sheftic sells everything from clothing to furniture. A few years ago, she expanded the building that she owns and added a craft section. "Selling crafts is a lot easier than consignment. You buy something and put a price on it and that is it. With consignment, you take in an item, price it 50 percent of what it cost new then you try to sell it." She said the shop owner must keep accurate records of their consignments. "Everything we do is computerized.

I have a markdown policy where the price is reduced every 30 or 60 days. If it does not go within a certain amount of time, it is donated if the person does not pick it up, which they usually do not. I have to keep good records because I have had over 3,000 consigners over the years."

The economy has brought people into the shop who never stopped before. "I try and make them comfortable when they come in if they are shopping." Sheftic said because of the downturn in the economy, she has not been getting as many consignments because people are not buying new. They do not have things they want to sell on consignment.

To be a wise shopper you should know the difference in shops. According to the National Association of Resale Professionals (NARTS) website, a resale shop is one that purchases their merchandise outright from individuals. A consignment or thrift shop can also be called a resale shop, but only a store that actually consigns their inventory can be called a consignment store and only a store run by a not for profit organization can be considered a thrift.

The Community Thrift Store of

Our Lady Queen of Angels is such a store. Located on Wheeler Street in the basement of the church building, the store fills a need for many people. Rev. Fr. Joseph Maurizio, pastor of the church, said some of the shoppers who frequent the store may not have the expendable income to pay their rent and struggle with expenses. While others are trying to save, say for a house, or some who are very much in need.

"Our prices are so affordable," he said. "We sell things that are (less than) other thrift shops and we have everything from clothing to knickknacks to household items." Maurizio works along with the Central City Food Pantry to reach people who are in need. "We gave out 120 gift certificates this past Christmas that could be used at our store. They often give out items, especially coats, at no charge to people in dire need.

The Central City shop is typical of what NARTS writes is a thrift shop. Not for Profits can obtain goods through donations or they could operate on a consignment basis. Some do both.

A thrift shop that everyone can identify with is Goodwill Industries. Phyllis Bandstra, the CEO of Goodwill of the Conemaugh Valley, said the economy and people's desire to recycle and reuse has kept their stores on an even keel. "I think what we see in the United States that people are interested in reusing items to stay green," she said.

"They can do that through their donations and by purchasing at resale stores. They seem like they are smarter on how to choose to spend their limited dollars. They know they will find really good deals at Goodwill and other resale stores."

Bandstra said today's shoppers are more desirous to have a cause attached to their purchasing. "You see that with a lot of retailers where they attached their selves to a not for profit. That is because customers are looking for that. When they donate to us, they know the items will be turned in to services to help our community like with our job training and career development."

Goodwill attracts shoppers from every economic status, said Bandstra. "What we are seeing now, more mid-



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*Thrift shops aren't the dark, dusty places they once were. An example is the Community Thrift Store of Our Lady Queen of Angels Church in Central City. They can provide you with everything you need for a house or an apartment, in addition to clothing for all the members of the family.*

dle class and definitely young people. Seeing young people leads me back to my thoughts on how they choose to spend their dollars. "Shoppers often have specific things they shop for, such as jeans and women's tops. "You can get five tops for the price of one in a regular retail store. Stores located in college towns tend to sell more furniture. We have a store in Indiana and we see lots and lots of furniture being sold there for their apartments." Bandstra said things coming in the door, such as the Somerset store, usually are sold right at that store.


Goodwill does sell on the Internet, she noted. "Mainly those kind of things that are one of a kind or unusual item, items that we feel we can get more dollars selling them this way to a larger market. You have to remember about us, it's all about mission, and we think

people who donate to us want us to get the most value out of it so we can move that into services. She said 93 cents on a dollar goes right back into services.

Goodwill has 10 stores and their mission is involved in each of the stores. "We have people with disabilities and kids on probation, where we are teaching them how to work."

She said the Richland store is an example of how they work with training individuals. "That store was actually designed for our needs as a mission-operated company. One of the store's features include a drop off canopy, so people can donate without being out in the elements. In addition, the store is light and airy with very wide isles with easy access to our merchandise. There is a training room in the back of the building, so we can do training and make necessary accommodations for people with disabilities so they can work back there. We have job coaches who work with them teaching them how to work. We really have designed that store specifically for our needs. We are usually retrofitting. That changes the look of the old thrift store."

Bandstra said it is important to give all shoppers a good shopping experience no matter what their income.

Quoting from NARTS, "resale will continue to gain popularity and become an even more important segment of the retail industry. Word of mouth is constantly spreading the value and excitement of reselling as fun, easy and friendly shopping experience. Gone are the dark, musty disorganized junk stores. The image of resale shops has changed as has the attitude of those who shop there." **S** 



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