

# THRIFT

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"We're just praying that the Northerners will come down and support us."

The Fort Myers store is on U.S. 41 near Edison Avenue.

The money from the stores goes to aid the needy, through 11 Catholic churches in Lee County, Parcell said.

"It helps all walks of life."

Call the Fort Myers store at (239) 273-0660 or the Cape Coral location at (239) 573-0217.

## Kiwanis Club and Goodwill see increased donations

Two Kiwanis Club thrift stores in Cape Coral are run entirely by volunteers, mostly retired people like Walter Booth, who was a cameraman for a television network in Manhattan.

Now he manages the Kiwanis store on Del Prado Boulevard, and also sells some of the items on eBay during the slow summer.

"We try and sell interesting things," he said. "We had an old pickle jar and it sold for \$50..."

"This is the slower season for everybody. The Northerners haven't come back and you know about the economy."

But in spite of the economy, sales are about average for the Kiwanis stores this year. Sales also remained "surprisingly consistent" at 23 Goodwill thrift stores in Southwest Florida, according to spokesperson Kirsten O'Donnell.

"We haven't seen a major hit yet," she said.

Even more surprising, she said donations were up 13 percent.

"We were expecting to see it about even or a little less," she said. "It was one of those numbers we looked at and said, 'Wait a second, is that right?'"

So why are people donating more?

"That's very hard to say," O'Donnell said.

Ted Cole, manager at the Kiwanis thrift store on 47th Terrace in Cape Coral, has a theory. He's seen an increase in furniture that he suspects might be due to foreclosures or businesses closing.

"I know that I get some calls that people have to sell it because they're moving," he said. "I don't know if it's a foreclosure or what. Sometimes we get (donations) because the people are storing furniture and they want to get rid of that storage fee."

Cole doesn't have enough trucks to pick up all the items people want to give away.

"Donations are way up," he said. "If I had another truck, I'd have twice as many donations."

Retired Cape Coral residents Len and Shirley Schilling donated a couch to the Kiwanis thrift store last week when they revamped the family room.

And it was picked up by volunteers Sam Sanchez, who used to deliver mail in Brooklyn; and Felix Lopez, who grew up in New Orleans' 9th Ward and owned a po-boy eatery there.

Lopez said the destruction from Hurricane Katrina was just as bad or worse than what was reported.

"I went back and it was devastation," he said. "I cried."

After picking up the couch, they went to Attic Storage in Cape Coral to collect some furniture that was left behind — but unfortunately it was too water damaged, so Sanchez and Lopez dragged it out to the curb.

The couple who owned the items left them when they moved to Georgia, said Attic Manager Al Sparrow.

That's something he has seen happen more recently.

"Since the economy has taken a downturn, some people who used to have two or three units have cut down to one," Sparrow said.

He speculates it may be because people have looked elsewhere for a job.

Sparrow's son recently moved to Virginia, where his wife found work.



EVAN WILLIAMS/FLORIDA WEEKLY  
Nathan Shay, 30, from Atlanta, shops at the Family Thrift Center.

"Hopefully, he'll find a job up there too, because he doesn't have one here," Sparrow said.

Call the Kiwanis stores in Cape Coral at (239) 574-1560 or (239) 542-2849, for pickup and delivery.

Call Goodwill at (239) 936-4599.

## Salvation Army

The Salvation Army runs an old thrift store on Fowler Street in Fort Myers, which opened in 1981.

It also boasts a new 30,000-square-foot Family Store on U.S. 41 in South Fort Myers that reflects a new marketing technique aimed at competing with department stores like Wal-Mart or Target.

"It's a whole move in marketing to get away from that second-hand (look)," said Meg Geltner, general manager of Salvation Army stores in Lee County. "This has been a trend now for about seven years. (It) started when the economy was thriving; back when the high school kids, about 10 years ago, discovered thrift stores — you know, your classic '70s clothing and what have you."

"Now what we're seeing are more middle-aged, middle-income women who are shopping, especially in our South Store. (It) has attracted a different customer base than our store on Fowler."

To donate or for more information, call (239) 278-1551.

## Family Thrift Center

You'll find Family Thrift Center in the former 84 Lumber building on Colonial Boulevard.

Shopping carts are lined up inside the door, and rows of clothing extend into the florescent-lit distance.

"Friends don't let friends pay retail," said owner Deirdre Mann. "...Our goal is that it feels as pleasant to shop in as a department store."

Mann's store is for-profit, but she buys all her goods from veterans' organizations. About half a semi-truck full of new items arrives every day for workers to sort into clothes, electronics, furniture, books, music and other things.

Last Saturday, LaBelle resident Donna Harvey was there to shop for books, cracked glass and a Halloween costume for her granddaughter. Fort Myers-resident Tatana Ferry was shopping for school clothes for her fourth grade daughter.

"In this place, if you'll really search, you can find brand new brands, and books are really cheap," she said.

But Nathan Shay, 30, from Atlanta, wasn't there for the brand names.

"I've got my fair share of \$25 T-shirts," he said. "But how often am I gonna find a Science Fair 2001 T-shirt?.."

"I've been shopping at thrift stores since I can walk."

Family Thrift is already open at its new location on Colonial, but will be throwing an official grand reopening party there Wednesday, Sept. 10, from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m.

For more information, call (239) 274-8821 or go online to FamilyThrift.com ■

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