

**News**  
Police Blotter  
Letters to the Editor  
Obituaries  
Weather  
**Columnists**  
Susan Carlman  
Tom Hernandez  
Jim Sheldon  
MY YAHOO!

SWAROVSKI CRYSTAL LIZZY  
FREE DELIVERY  
SWAROVSKI CRYSTALLIZED™  
PERFECT GIFTS FOR YOU AND YOURS  
VISIT ONLINE STORE

NEWS ::

Print Article Email Article Share / Bookmark Buzz up!

**It's a wonderful, thrifty life for the holidays**

Comments

December 11, 2009

By KIM SMITH ksmith@scn1.com

While a lot of mom and pop shops have shut their doors due to the struggling economy, cash registers at local resale shops have been ringing more than usual this holiday season.

Michelle Hepburn opened the Cedar Closet Boutique about 18 months ago after four years in the same business in a different location. "I worked 15 years as a property manager for a company that sold," Hepburn said. "I decided that I no longer wanted to work in an office. This has always been my dream and I just decided to go for it."

» Click to enlarge image



Michelle Hepburn arranges the cloths at the Cedar Closet in New Lenox. Hepburn is hoping that a high end resale shop will do well in this market. John Patsch / staff photographer

The building at 1264 N. Cedar Road in New Lenox boasts 2,000 square feet of treasures.

Her wares, ranging from gently used clothing to handmade scarves, home decor and a lot more, have literally filled every available space.

"I have people coming in every day with more good stuff," Hepburn said. "I can only take in so much."

**Cedar Closet II**

To deal with her space crunch, Hepburn is opening a second location in the next few weeks. Cedar Closet II, at 14409 Edison Drive in

New Lenox, will be about three miles south of the first store and will house mainly upscale furniture and home decor.

"We will keep some things here, but there just is not enough room," Hepburn said. "I have received a lot of inquiries from people looking for used furniture."

Her plans are to offer art and interior decorating classes out of the new store in February.

**Big business**

This surge of business in the world of resale is not surprising to the National Association of Resale and Thrift Shops. It predicted a substantial increase in holiday sales this year based on recent trends. With the economic downturn, the resale industry attracts new customers and suppliers.

Association members have reported significant increases in both sales and incoming inventory in the past year as consumers tighten their spending and search for sources of extra income.

"Resale shops offer unique merchandise and exceptional customer service, making them an increasingly popular destination for gift shopping," said association Executive Director Adele Meyer. "With the recognition of resale shops as mainstream retailers, they have become a favorite source for presents, as well as holiday fashions and decor for smart consumers seeking quality at a savings. Resale gives consumers the opportunity to accomplish their holiday shopping while staying within their budget."

The association said the reason is resale offers the same amenities consumers are used to seeing at department stores but with lower prices. Customers enjoy the personal attention these smaller stores give.

Hepburn has a purse collector among her regular clientele. She called her immediately upon taking in a designer Coach handbag.

"I agreed to put it aside for her," Hepburn said. "It is a small touch I can give a customer that larger retail stores cannot."

**Consignment vs. thrift**

While all shops that sell gently used consumer goods are "resale" shops, the association said there is a difference.

A resale shop is the phrase most often used for stores that buy their merchandise outright from individual owners.

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 nonprofit organization is considered a thrift store. Cedar Closet is actually a consignment store.

A thrift shop is run by a nonprofit organization to raise money to fund its charitable causes. These range from MorningStar Mission and the Goodwill chains to individual school, church or hospital thrift shops.

Nonprofits can obtain goods through donations or they could operate on a consignment basis. Some do both.

A consignment shop accepts merchandise on a consignment basis, paying the owners of the merchandise a percentage when and if the items are sold. The majority of such shops pay the owners from 40 percent to 60 percent of the selling price, and have a policy of displaying goods for anywhere from 30 to 90 days, although there is a wide range of policies across the country. Some consignment shops also purchase a variety of items outright from individual owners and/or wholesalers.

Elaine Krieger, president of Krieger Kiddie Corp., the owner of 11 consignment shops including the Once Upon A Child and Plato's Closet in Crest Hill, said her sales are up 15 percent to 60 percent, depending on the store.

Once Upon A Child is at 2108 Plainfield Road and deals mainly with baby clothing. Plato's Closet is at 2372 Plainfield Road.

Krieger has been in the business 11 years and feels the economy is not the only reason sales are up.

"We are more aware than ever on the benefits of becoming greener by recycling more and wasting less," Krieger said. "Babies grow out of everything so fast that their clothes are hardly used. Today our teenagers like the way clothes look when they are worn."

**Helping those in need**

Another benefit to shoppers is that they can come into a resale shop with a bag filled with clothing they do not need any more and walk out with a bag of clothes they now need.

MorningStar Mission Ministries Inc. has also experienced a surge of sales in its local thrift stores, Treasure Chest I at 2221 W. Jefferson in Joliet and Treasure Chest II at 2571 E. Lincoln Highway in New Lenox.

"Sales in our New Lenox store seems to be increasing steadily, with more customers coming in every day," said Justin Laib, general store manager for MorningStar. "I would like to believe our economy is a part of the reason."

Another reason Laib gives for customers preferring to shop in their thrift stores is due to the fact that 100 percent of their profits go back to provide clothing, shelter and counseling for folks in need.

"You get a \$3 shirt or a \$60 La-Z-Boy for a bargain but you also get to help those who are less fortunate," Laib said. "We offer special discounts such as our Senior Tuesdays that always seem to draw the crowds."

**I am so glad I came'**

Sharon Pecker, of Joliet, recently made a special trip to Cedar Closets to look at a comforter found by a mutual friend on a previous visit. While she was disappointed that the comforter had sold, it did not stop her from looking around and finding a dress for a special occasion.

"I was getting ready to have Thanksgiving dinner and decided I needed a break," Pecker said. "I came out and found this dress. I am so glad I came."

Christina Paeth of Peotone said visiting resale and thrift shops are worth riding out of town for.

"I have been a fan of resale shops for 20 years," Paeth said. "Cedar Closet is one of my favorites. Everything is laid out so cute and I always find some very good stuff. I also shop Goodwill."



What to do.... if you get the flu

**Holiday Gift Guide**  
Casey's Market  
Jimmy's Charhouse

Visit zip2save.com for all your favorite circulars & coupons!  
Circulars | Coupons | Deals zip2save.com

**Top Jobs**  
Assistant Professors in Education  
Programmers  
LANDSCAPE LABORERS  
Phlebotomist/Medical Assistant  
Adjunct Faculty Position  
Contract Manager  
Certified Medical Assistant  
DEVELOPERS  
LANDSCAPING  
INSTRUCTIONAL TECHNOLOGY CONSULTANTS - Chicago, IL  
View all

**Video**  
American Idol auditions...  
Johnny Depp Thrills...

**TOP STORIES ::**

**NEWS**  
Bolingbrook house blast cause sought

**BUSINESS**  
Keeping focused at work through the holidays

**SPORTS**  
Hinsdale C. gets by Plainfield East

**ENTERTAINMENT**  
Blue Moon wants to see you more than once

**LIFESTYLES**  
Local veterans honored by Honor Flight

Click Here  
**Plainfield**  
Need space for the piano!  
For a Limited Time  
**3,000 sq. ft. for \$298K or less** Inc. 80' Wide Lot  
Click Here To Learn More  
**We Move Walls For You.**  
Custom Single-family Homes from the mid \$230s  
**KRUGHOFF HOMEBUILDERS**

Articles provided by: **ARAlifestyle.com**  
Why hair loss supplements don't work  
Caring for aging parents? Where to find help  
Anti aging for your scalp and hair

Click here for **SEARCHCHICAGO** DAILY AUTO DEALS