

Savvy Shopper: Customers Find Value in Store's Donation Jar

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GREENSBORO - Peggy Smith sees customers of all stripes at her thrift store. Treasure Hunters. Those barely making ends meet in tough economic times. Rich and Poor. Lately, college students and their moms have been shopping for dorm room supplies on the cheap at the Freedom House Thrift Store on West Market Street. One thing many have in common? Filling the thrift store's donation jar on the front counter. The money is used to support a group home for mothers struggling with addiction that is run by Freedom House, a nonprofit Christian ministry.

"A lot of people I know who are struggling themselves will put a donation in there, however small," Smith said inside the store, her voice filled with emotion. "It touches my heart."

Giving back to the community? Priceless. Great deals? Icing on the cake. Freedom House Thrift has plenty of those, too.

Take the brand-name jeans such as Route 66 and Gap in great condition for \$3.99 to \$6.99. Or two-piece women's suits for \$5.99, purses for \$3, men's suits for \$8.99, king-sized bed sheets for \$6 to \$7.

Plus other merchandise including books, CDs, records, 45s, paintings, dolls, trinkets, jewelry, and more. "We basically have a little bit of everything," Smith said. The store has also seen a steady increase in customers since opening in 2007. Reasons include the recession, which reflects nationwide trends regarding customers hoping to stretch their dollars by turning to resale shops. But there are other factors. A recently opened flea market that shares the same shopping center space is drawing some new customers to Freedom House Thrift.

More customers visit the store whenever fashion consultant Beth Sartore features it in her Style Cents column which appears the first Sunday of each month.

The store is at 4639-B W. Market Street in Greensboro in the Marshall's Shopping Center at the intersection with Spring Garden Street. It is open from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Saturday.