

The Folks Behind the Upcycle Approach to Living Green



BY JOAN LINCOLN

Rochester area consignment shops are serious about luxury resale.

DEFINITION: Enterprises that generate revenue by selling consigned, donated, mostly gently-enjoyed secondhand goods.

SIGNIFICANCE: Thrift stores require minimal startup financing while serving as fund-raising vessels for charitable organizations, low-cost retail options for consumers, and steady sources of income for ownership.

Historically, the concept of thrift arose alongside the founding of religious and private philanthropy. Organizations such as the Salvation Army (founded in 1865), American Red Cross (1881), and Goodwill Industries (1902) recognized the necessity of providing services catering to the physical and emotional needs of underserved populations. Specifically, the Salvation Army and Goodwill Industries sought to bring the Christian faith to groups marginalized by the Industrial Revolution by combining scripture with charitable works.

Although these charitable organizations began with limited resources, the revenues eventually generated by their thrift stores rivaled those of traditional retail businesses. In the 2006 fiscal year, for example, Goodwill Industries reported revenues in excess of \$2.9 billion with \$1.8 billion (62 percent) generated in retail sales from its global network of 2,100 thrift stores. Similarly, the Salvation Army of the United States reported \$3 billion in revenues, with approximately 15 percent of its revenue generated from its nearly 1,500 thrift shops.

According to the National Association of Resale and Thrift Shops, resale is one of the fastest-growing retail segments, with an annual growth of five percent. Furthermore, during any given year, 16 to 18 percent of all Americans shop at thrift stores, and 12 to 15 percent shop at consignment stores. By contrast, 11.4 percent of Americans shop in factory outlet malls, 19.6 percent in apparel stores, and 21.3 percent in major department stores.

Many of us have favorite childhood memories perhaps involving rummaging through the racks at the local thrift store with family and

friends. A Saturday morning ritual for many, it was almost impossible to leave the shop empty handed. There was always a vintage patent leather clutch or rhinestone brooch or silk scarf—with prices tags well under \$5.00.

FAST FORWARD 20 YEARS. Now vintage fashion doesn't always equal bargain prices. Deals that could be found in local thrift stores are now going for \$100.00 plus dollars. In fact, many resale shop owners stock their stores with items they find at their local Salvation Army, Goodwill or Savers stores.

Luxury resale is a bit more specific and the educated consumer wants it! Gathering the authentic and high-end designer and boutique labels takes a trained eye. The quality of the goods and the condition of the merchandise is key for a successful luxury resale boutique to survive. Merchandising and customer service can still exist in a consignment/resale environment.

Rochester is blessed with over 60+ consignment/resale/thrift unique shopping environments, putting Rochester, NY on the resale map and destination shopping hot spot in Upstate New York. We entertain bus tours from surrounding cities and communities because of our unique resale shops and dedication to our businesses.

If you don't yet shop at resale stores then ask yourself "why not?" If you picture dingy floors, bad lighting, and torn clothing heaped together, you might be pleasantly surprised. There are a few like that in every town, I'm sure, but for the most part, they are a veritable gold mine of unclaimed wealth.

With the sketchy economy, it's a no-brainer way to save money. Even when the economic situation is in full bloom, resale is a practical, reasonable, and easy way to stretch your family's dollars. You'd be surprised at the money you can save.

Another person's castaway can be your treasure; it may appear mediocre at first but eventually stands out as being exceptional. It's fun to find that under-appreciated item whether it be a item of clothing, a piece of furniture or a perfect glass dish - it's your "diamond in the rough"

...now you really can have the best without spending the most.