

Fabulous FURNITURE 2002

Resale shops offer bargains, benefits

BY DIANE GALE ANDREASSI
CORRESPONDENT

The lure of great finds at "less expensive prices" is enough of a lure for Angela Wallace of Waterford to visit consignment shops at least once a week.

She finds things for her home, children and friends.

Her most prized find at Recherche Fine Consignment Furniture in Waterford was a TV cabinet.

When you go to consignment shops, she said, you can't get disappointed if you don't find what you're looking for the first time.

"Eventually you will find what you're looking for," she said.

Consignment shops and estate sales are for avid shoppers who like surprises and getting deals well below retail value.

"We tend to specialize in higher-end things for the most part," said Dana Demski, owner of Recherche.

He sells furniture, art work and home accessories focusing on designer brands, such as Dreux Heritage, Thomasville and Baker, as well as custom made furniture in like-new condition.

Shoppers never know what they might bump into on a given day, like a 1920s antique cabinet or a wooden medicine man complete with clothes from Kenya.

"People are looking for good deals on good things," Demski said. "A person could come to the store and get it for half for what it might sell for later."

People who like to shop like the store because we get new and different things all the time."

Demski advises, however, that shoppers should know the value of items before they start

visiting resale and consignment shops. Those are the shoppers who find antiques at bargain prices, he said.

Demski gets his stock from people who want to sell furniture and accessories, but they don't want the hassle of dealing with customers and opening their homes up to the public.

Oftentimes, Demski said, they're trying to downsize; they're moving; they're going through a divorce; or maybe there's a death in the family. Sometimes they simply want to make room for new decor and instead of giving away their things, they decide to try to make some money.

The seller gets a percentage of the sales at Recherche.

Recherche picks up items from the seller's home and delivers them to the buyer's home.

"I don't just take anything," Demski said. "I'm pretty picky. My rule of thumb is that if I wouldn't be proud of it being in my home, I don't want it to be in my store. People coming to shop know they're only going to find nice items."

DOING GOOD

Other resale shops are profitable vehicles for fund-raisers, such as the American Cancer Society Discovery Shops in Livonia, Plymouth, Rochester, and Sterling Heights. A new Discovery Shop is expected to open in Birmingham in late October.

"People generally feel good when they buy something here," said Brenda Deneau, manager. "They're doing something good."

Owned and operated by the American Cancer Society, the store is staffed with more than 50 volunteers. Merchandise includes furniture for the entire



Dana Demski (right), owner of Recherche Fine Consignment Furniture in Waterford, talks to a customer.

home; women's and men's wear; antiques and accessories, from pictures to lamps and mirrors.

"It really is pretty unique," Deneau said.

The items that are sold have been donated, which raises nearly \$200,000 annually in gross sales at the Livonia store alone. The money raised goes toward cancer research; education, prevention programs; services and advocacy work.

Donations are accepted daily 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday-Saturday at all the Discovery Shop locations.

Cancer survivors, their family members and friends often hear about the shops from one another.

"Most of the time that's how people find their way here," Deneau said. "Half of the volunteers are cancer survivors and the other half have had someone go through the cancer ordeal. There's a lot of empathy here for those people."

ESTATE SALES

After visiting the consignment and resale shops, some bargain hunters make it a

weekend ritual to attend as many estate sales as possible.

It's the ultimate treat for the curious-minded who are invited to meander from room to room and are encouraged to open drawers and look into closets.

Everything in the house is for sale - from dining room sets, to patio furniture, to antiques and refrigerators to wedding dresses, jewelry and even the smallest items, like hand cream.

"Sometimes people find things that I don't even find," said Ely Barnett, owner of Finger's Keepers in Farmington Hills.

"They dig them out," she said. "People like to dig into boxes and find their own little treasures."

The prices range from 25 cents to thousands of dollars.

"Sometimes it's sad, because you get intimate with the person you're doing the sale for," Barnett said. "They're not there, but you feel close to them. Some people travel all over the world and that's what's left in the end."

"There's something for everyone," Barnett said.

Surprises as well as savings in store

DIANE GALE ANDREASSI
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There's something intriguing about never knowing what you're going to find when you go to consignment shops. Maybe it's the chair for the foyer you've always hoped to get. Or the solid desk for the den. There's even a chance you won't find anything you like.

But if there wasn't a chance for failure, the big finds wouldn't be as sweet.

"You never know what's coming in," said Ken Barthelette, owner of Yankee Consignment Inc. in Farmington. "It's always a surprise every day."

The Farmington store offers up-to-date furniture in very good to excellent condition, as well as antiques and accessories.

At Re-Sell-It Estate Sales in Farmington, Haig and Florence Jevahirian split the sale price 50-50 with sellers.

"We take art and furniture of all kinds for any room at all," Jevahirian said, pointing to bedroom sets that he said might not fit in other, smaller consignment shops.

A lot of people might not understand that the quality of furniture is much higher than they would find at most discount retail stores, Jevahirian said about the things he sells.

"The \$400 sofa here might have been a \$2,000 sofa," said Jevahirian, a certified appraiser who also conducts on-site estate sales.

"An \$8,000 dining room set could be \$2,000 to \$3,000 in our showroom and virtually in excellent condition."

If the item is dated - for instance, crying of the 1970s with greens, golds and rusts - it won't be accepted at Yankee Consignment, Barthelette said.

"We take pianos, sofas, chairs, love sets, bedroom sets, and most anything that goes with the home, like lamps, pictures, mirrors and china," Barthelette said.

Customers come from all over the metropolitan Detroit area to both shops and some make it a weekly ritual.

"They're looking for something unusual or something that they might need," Barthelette said.

The person who is selling the item foregoes the hassle of dealing with people and not knowing who they're bringing to their front door.

"The headache is gone," Barthelette said. "They don't have to worry about phone calls and people who say they're going to show up and don't. Or the wrong person coming to the door."

Re-Sell-It Estate Sales and Yankee Consignment have trucks and employees who pick up and deliver furniture.

One of the most unusual items Barthelette said he had was a large picture of local television celebrities John Kelly and Marilyn Turner.

"There was a beautiful frame that it was in," he said.

Some customers mistakenly believe they're walking into a retail store that sells new items when they're at Re-Sell-It Estate Sales, Jevahirian said.

"We take in better furniture from an upscale clientele," he said.

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