

This article appeared in a recent issue of The Merchandiser, published by Engle Printing and Publishing, Mount Joy, PA. The article was written by Susan E. Grubb.

The 2nd Chances Thrift Shop, at First Presbyterian Church of Mount Joy offers a shopping bargain to area residents. Proceeds from the shop enable the church to help out in ways it would be unable to do with its regular finances, according to coordinator Barb O'Neal. The shop opened on June 1, 2007, and during its first year earned nearly \$22,000.

The shop, located at 7 Marietta Avenue, is open from 3 to 8 pm on Fridays and from 9 am to 3 pm on Saturdays. Patrons may access the shop by entering Sassafras Alley off Marietta Avenue and parking behind the church. The entrance is on the west side of the church.

O'Neal said that 2nd Chances was started after the church had been holding two rummage sales each year. Rather than set up and tear down those sales, church members decided to start a thrift shop. "We knew it would be more work in the long run, but it would be beneficial to the neighborhood," she said. The basement of the church was renovated to house the enterprise. A portion of the proceeds from the thrift shop benefits the church's building fund, and the rest helps people in the local community and beyond.

O'Neal noted that several fire victims have benefited from the thrift shop. Private appointments were set, and the families were invited to select whatever they needed from the shop at no charge. Items are also donated to other charitable enterprises, including Midnight Run (www.midnightrun.org), a group that takes men's clothing and food to homeless people in New York City, and Sunset Gap in Cosby, Tenn., a community center that provides clothing for people who are seeking jobs. At the end of each season, the clothing that remains on the racks is donated to Mount Joy Church of God for its rummage sale.

The shop offers an extensive array of merchandise, all of which is clean and in good condition, said O'Neal. Among the offerings are housewares, books, craft and sewing supplies, home décor, electronics, toys, cards, small appliances, and clothing and accessories for infants, men, women, and children. There is also an area that sells new merchandise and an area that sells antiques and collectibles.

O'Neal credits a dedicated group of volunteers who sort, clean and repair, and price items and stock them in the thrift shop. They include Peg Shuman, Darlene Henly, Joan and Ray Helwig, Buzz and Gerry Bowman, Jim Roberts, Pete Foley, Helen Herr, Barbara Bair, and Beverly Myers. Marilyn Pomroy, Lonnie Nolt, and Jean Shelly are the main cashiers, and Deb Hoffman organizes and coordinates the work of the volunteers. "I call them the heart of the organization," said O'Neal. Also, O'Neal's daughter, Sherry, makes cookies to serve free of charge in the coffee and cookie corner, which has become a popular feature of the store. The community support is also valuable to 2nd Chances. O'Neal said the community has been wonderful in donating merchandise for the shop. Some people even donate goods before shopping for themselves. Donations are accepted during store hours and from 9 am to 2 pm on Tuesdays.

People from all walks of life shop at the thrift shop, noted O'Neal. "It has become more and more prevalent for people to frequent thrift shops, whatever their economic situations," she said.

The shop has become a part of the community and participates in Main Street Mount Joy's Fourth Friday events. For example, Friday, January 23 will feature a sweetheart theme, and 2nd Chances will offer special cookies and candy. Each week, there are unadvertised specials, which people find out about when they enter the store.

For more information, interested individuals may call 653-5888, visit www.firstpresmountjoy.com, or email fpcmj@embarqmail.com.