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< < Back

Charity's stores build homes, lives Franklin Habitat for Humanity shop is latest to offer cheap construction materials



Worker Chad Wisniewski puts out a display of newly donated tile at the Habitat ReStore store in Murfreesboro. SANFORD MYERS / STAFF

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The first time I set foot in a Habitat store that sold donated building materials and household goods, I thought to myself, "Boy, oh boy, this is the perfect setup. They should have these stores in every little town and city."

Well, I am happy to report that that is becoming the case in Middle Tennessee as more Habitat organizations open these win-win stores that are filled with really cool new and gently used stuff.

I love the concept of keeping usable items out of the landfill, giving do-it-yourselfers and bargain hunters a place to shop for unusual things at low prices, and at the same time supporting the great home-building mission that is Habitat.

The most recent opening is Habitat for Humanity of Williamson County's new Renovation Station at 300 Eddy Court, just off Liberty Pike in Franklin.

Store co-manager Bobbi Copeland, who was a volunteer with the Habitat store in Lexington, Ky., before moving here, has filled her 5,000-square-foot store with everything from donated new furniture and mattresses to doors and windows, paint, ceiling fans, toilets, light fixtures, appliances, dishes and drapes.

Like its counterparts in other Midstate towns, the Franklin store's inventory consists completely of items donated by contractors, suppliers, retailers, manufacturers and individuals, making for a surprising and always changing mix of merchandise.

"I want it to look like a home store — not just a building materials store," Copeland said, noting that local merchants such as Costco, Direct Buy, Lowe's and others have been generous with donations of floor samples, overruns and discontinued items. "I see big things happening in Williamson County with this."

I agree; this store has real potential. It is a nice, clean, well-lighted space and has lots of good stuff priced at about half the original price on new items and less on the used merchandise.

Right now the goal is for the store to generate enough money to pay for the Williamson County Habitat organization's overhead so that all money donated to Habitat will go directly to building houses. If the Renovation Station's business grows like the organizers think it will, the store will start funding some home construction on top of the overhead.

Habitat for

Habitat is a n housing mini more than 20 around the w than 1 million peo 3,000 commu decent, affon Volunteers w houses that e homeowners financed with interest loans mortgage pa finance more Recipients at their level of willingness to their ability to interest loan. To apply or to call the Habit your county c ext. 2551. ww

Store hours are 10 a.m.–4 p.m. Tuesday–Friday and 8 a.m.–2 p.m. Saturdays. 591-7077.

Other store news:

- In Murfreesboro, the Habitat ReStore that opened three years ago has relocated to a huge 14,400-square-foot warehouse at 850 Mercury Blvd. There is tons of new and used stuff, including lots of cool columns, a tall stack of new recessed medicine cabinets and a little bit of everything else. Hours are 10 a.m.–6 p.m. Wednesday–Friday and 9 a.m.–5 p.m. Saturdays. 849-5994.
- In Nashville, the wildly successful Habitat Home Store now has two locations. The original, at 1001 Eighth Ave. S., focuses on household and office goods (couches, some that look new, desks and chairs, window treatments, file cabinets, conference tables, lamps), and a second store at 908 Division focuses on true building materials and appliances (mantels, cabinets, doors, sinks, tubs, tile, trim pieces and windows). Both locations have light fixtures, many of which are new. On my most recent visit I was intrigued to find dozens of wooden desks (priced at \$35 and \$55) that had come from the dormitories at Fisk that are being remodeled, as well as a huge sample of desk and table chairs. Hours are 9 a.m.–5:30 p.m. Monday–Saturday. 259-9548.
- Habitat for Humanity of Wilson County's ReStore, at 205 Maple St. in Lebanon, keeps on keeping on with a jam-packed assortment of donated building materials and household items. They now have more than 1,000 rolls of wallpaper (some with original prices of \$30 a roll) that they are selling for \$2 per double roll and \$1 for borders. They also have 15 pallets of mounts for plasma TVs that they are selling for \$20 apiece. Hours are 10 a.m.–4:30 p.m. Tuesday–Saturday. 453-3799.
- Putnam County Habitat for Humanity has had its ReStore store for more than two years at 711 East 15th St. in Cookeville. The store is about 4,000 square feet and there are plans to expand later this year. ReStore is open 9 a.m.–2 p.m. Thursday and Saturday. 931-528-1711.

A few things you should know about these wonderful reuse stores:

- Some of the reuse stores have a wish list where you can write down items you are looking for, and they will call if those items come in. These lists are not foolproof, but it can't hurt to get on the list. Plus, sometimes the stores have items they haven't put out yet or the store employees may know about something that is coming in and can let you know.
- Shop often, and don't be tentative. The merchandise moves very quickly, so if you see something you want, you better grab it. Chances are, it won't be there the next time you stop in.
- Most items are sold as is, and the stores do not like returns, so inspect before you pay.
- If you have items to donate, deliver them if at all possible. Call first to be sure they want what you have. The stores will usually pick up larger items if you don't have a way to deliver them.
- Don't donate things the stores can't sell, such as appliances that don't work or lead-based paint.
- Feel good about donating, shopping or volunteering to work in these stores, because the money goes to help build Habitat houses for deserving families.

Stay cheap! •

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