

EARTH



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Odyssey



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Photo by Pia Wyr

The ReStore in Prescott has 14,600 sq. ft. of new and used merchandise. The ReStore is open Monday through Saturday and the store phone number is (928) 771-1777.

Restores Help Habitat For Humanity Help others

By Ann Haver-Allen

What does an antique sewing machine, a Constantini Pietro dining table with six chairs and a slightly used 42-inch wide screen TV have in common?

These items are among thousands donated to the Habitat for Humanity's ReStore in Prescott. The ReStore is the apex of recycling and reusing products and keeping them out of our landfills. In fact, recycling is such an integral part of the ReStore, that the O in the logo is a recycling symbol.

But recycling at the ReStore is not equivalent to our due diligence of sorting and depositing our aluminum cans, plastic bottles and cardboard. Recycling at the ReStore is a much higher order.

It goes something like this: donations are made to the store; donations are sorted into those that are sold and those that are immediately recycled; donations that are sold net funds that pay administrative costs for Habitat for Humanity, thereby allowing 100 percent

of all other donations to go directly into building homes; a needy family acquires one of those homes after partnering with Habitat through a stringent qualifying process.

It's recycling that begins on the individual level and spreads throughout the community.

ReStore DONATIONS

The Prescott ReStore carries just about everything you would need to setup a household, including kitchen appliances, bowls, knives, spoons, forks, glasses, cups, furniture, lighting, rugs, bedding, nick-knacks and art. The store also carries a wide variety of appliances including stoves, refrigerators, microwave ovens, telephones and answering machines. For the finishing touches, how about a computer or stereo system?

"You can find everything here from ancient hand tools to brand new Craftsman® power tools to fantastic antiques and burl wood furniture," said Gary Janchik, direc-

tor of the Prescott ReStore. "If you don't see what you want today, come back often. We get new stuff in all the time."

Janchik said it's that mystery of what will be found in the ReStore that keeps customers coming back. He compared it to a garage sale with the possibility of finding a treasure at a super cheap price.

ReStore customers help ensure success with a give-and-take philosophy. Many customers arrive with a donation and then come inside to shop.

Donations for the ReStore come from individuals and businesses alike. Businesses are struggling in the current economic climate, and that harsh reality has significantly affected donations.

"We have a lot of contractors who donate their excess materials," Janchik said. "When those come through the store, it's a real bonanza for us. But that's not happening as much during this economic downturn. A lot of the small contractors have had to go to Phoenix to find work, so that dries up a lot

of our resources."

Another harsh reality, Janchik said, is the number of stores that are closing their doors.

"As they close, they have been gifting us with stock," he said. "It's a wonderful way for them to take a very difficult part of their life and turn it into something positive. Our success really is due to the generosity of our community."

"It's really hard to grasp the cycle unless you become part of it," Janchik said. "It looks warm and fuzzy on the outside, but once you get inside, it really is warm and fuzzy. There is an aspect to giving that nothing else can touch."

Janchik said ReStore shoppers hit every social stratum. He noted that it's not uncommon to see a Porsche or Lamborghini in the parking lot parked right next to an old pickup truck. He said that illustrates the diversity of customers who visit the ReStore—those who cannot afford to shop elsewhere and those who could shop anywhere, but choose the ReStore.



Photo by Pia Wyer

Kelly Atkin and daughter Sage, were one of the four families to receive a new home from the Payson Area Habitat for Humanity.

“My biggest challenge in this store is acquiring donations,” Janchik said. “At times when the economy was fantastic, we would have a line of cars going around the building to drop things off. That’s not happening now. January and February are traditionally our slowest times of the year and with donations already down, it’s kind of bothering us because it’s also a critical time for people who need things.”

Sorting, Selling

The ReStore is a first-rate second-hand store, Janchik said, and as such, when donations arrive, they are sorted into those that are sold and those that are immediately recycled.

“We are very careful about the quality of product that we sell in the store,” Janchik said. “If someone donates a refrigerator, it has to be plugged in and running when we pick it up. People want second-hand items cheap, but they don’t want garbage. There’s no attraction to buying garbage.”

Telephones, televisions, stereos and computers are all checked out to ensure that they are in working order before being placed on the sales floor. Products not worthy of being resold are recycled.

Janchik said recycling electronics and cardboard has gotten much more difficult with the economic downturn, and that he now uses a recycler who works out of Phoenix for the electronic waste.

“We have always recycled cardboard,” he

said. “Right now, that’s very difficult. It’s tough to find a recycling vendor who will come out and pick it up. We may have to transport the material ourselves.”

Although many businesses are mouthing green this and green that, Janchik said that the ReStore really is green and environmentally sensitive.

“It pervades everything we do,” he said. “In every aspect of Habitat, we are very frugal. We get recycling. It’s why in our logo for the ReStore, you will see the recycling symbol in the O. It’s not just by chance and it’s not just trendy marketing. It’s one of our core values for what we do. It works out economically, but it also feels good knowing that all the items for sale in the ReStore would have ended up in a landfill.”

The role that ReStore plays is even larger than recycling and keeping products out of landfills. The ReStore makes products available to those who would not normally be able to obtain them. Products such as computers.

“Some people don’t have \$500 to \$600 to buy a new computer,” Janchik said. “We sell computers for \$40 to \$100. Is it the newest operating system? No. It is probably a year or two old? Yes. But it still has a lot of functionality and benefits people who cannot buy a new product. And that’s always satisfying to see someone come into the store and find what they need.”

An eyeglass station is a new component to the ReStore that Janchik has added.

“I can’t imagine anything worse than living without glasses if you didn’t have money to

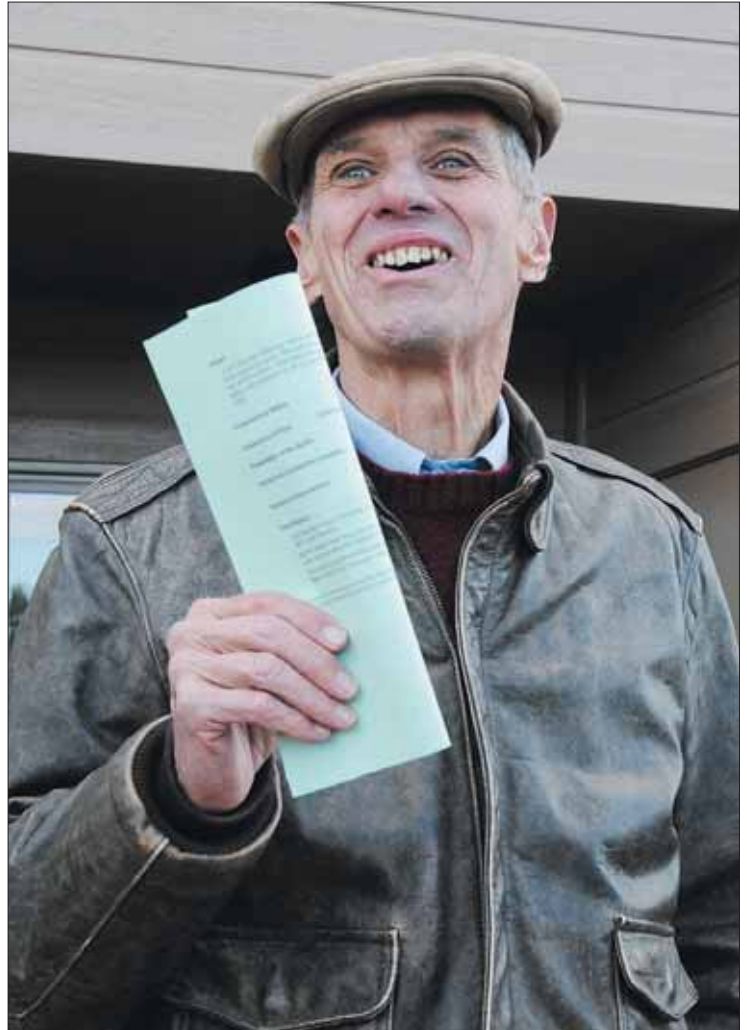


Photo by Pia Wyer

Bruce Hopkins, President of the Payson Area Habitat for Humanity Board of Directors, welcomes four families to their new homes.



Photo by Pia Wyer

At the dedication of her new home, Joelle Huffman poses with Carol Drury, her Big Sister from the Big Brothers/Big Sisters organization..

Habitat For Humanity Myths and Truths

MYTH: Habitat for Humanity gives houses to poor people.

TRUTH: Houses are not given to anyone. Habitat for Humanity builds houses with people in need and then sells the houses to homeowner partners through interest-free loans. Because houses are built principally by volunteers, mortgage payments can be kept reasonable to those unable to obtain conventional financing. Habitat homeowners typically have incomes that are 30 percent to 50 percent of the median income in the area. They are required to invest hundreds of hours in "sweat equity"—that is, time spent building their own home or other Habitat houses.

MYTH: Habitat builds houses only for minorities.

TRUTH: Habitat doesn't build houses for anyone. We build houses with people in need, without regard to race. Three criteria drive the family-selection process: need; ability to repay the mortgage; and willingness to partner with Habitat.

MYTH: Habitat homeowners are on welfare.

TRUTH: While some Habitat homeowners do receive public assistance, most work at low-wage jobs. Habitat works in good faith with people who often are at risk in society, knowing that owning a home is not the answer to every problem, but that it can be an important step—often the first step—toward helping people break out of the cycle of poverty.

MYTH: You have to be a Christian to become a Habitat homeowner.

TRUTH: Habitat for Humanity was founded as, and unashamedly remains, a Christian ministry. However, homeowners are chosen without regard to race, creed or nationality.

MYTH: Habitat houses allow people to move from poverty to fancy new houses.

TRUTH: Any newly built house is going to be a dramatic change for a family that has been living in a shack, hut or rundown apartment. But Habitat houses are not extravagant by any standard. Habitat's philosophy is to build simple, decent houses. Under house design criteria approved by Habitat for Humanity International's board of directors, living space in a three-bedroom house, for example, is not to exceed 1,050 square feet. The average cost in the United States of a three-bedroom Habitat house is approximately \$59,000.

MYTH: Habitat houses lower neighborhood property values.

TRUTH: Many studies of low-cost housing show that affordable housing has no adverse effect on other neighborhood property values. Habitat firmly believes its approach to affordable housing improves neighborhoods and communities by strengthening community spirit and increasing the tax base, while building better citizens through the cooperative efforts involved in Habitat construction.

MYTH: Habitat homeowners sell their houses and make a large profit because of the original low cost.

TRUTH: Special second mortgages that are "paid off" by living in the house, as well as first buyback option clauses that many Habitat affiliates put into their agreement with homeowners, help alleviate concerns that some people may have regarding the resale of houses.

MYTH: Habitat for Humanity is a Southern poverty program.

TRUTH: Habitat for Humanity International started in the Southern United States and remains based in Americus, Ga. It is a global partnership, however, drawing families in need together with volunteers and resources to build simple, decent houses all over the world. Habitat has worked in more than 3,000 communities in some 100 countries.

MYTH: Habitat for Humanity is an arm of the government.

TRUTH: Habitat for Humanity International is an independent, nonprofit Christian housing ministry. It is not an arm of the government, nor an arm of any particular church denomination.

MYTH: Habitat for Humanity was started by former U.S. President Jimmy Carter.

TRUTH: Habitat for Humanity International was started in Americus, Ga., in 1976 by Millard Fuller, along with his wife, Linda. Former U.S. President Jimmy Carter and his wife, Rosalynn, are longtime Habitat supporters and volunteers who help bring national and international attention to the organization's house-building work.

MYTH: Habitat for Humanity operates through chapters in states and countries throughout the world.

TRUTH: Habitat does not operate through centrally controlled chapters but through locally run affiliates. Affiliates are grassroots organizations of local people coming together to address local housing needs. Each affiliate is an independent nonprofit organization that operates with specific service areas under a covenant relationship with Habitat for Humanity International.



Photos by Pia Wyr

A selection of items available for purchase from the Prescott ReStore on a recent December day include, from top left, an antique sewing machine, moulding, a huge selection of windows and a power saw.

buy them," Janchik said. "Not being able to drive or read. It's just a monster. People are constantly donating eyeglasses to us, so that opens the door to giving glasses to those who need them. I've got a station in the store where you can pick up glasses if you need them or drop them off if you no longer need them."

Janchik said capitalizing on that opportunity is instrumental in the ReStore philosophy.

"We try to look at everything that we can possibly do to help out," he said. "I think it helps us grow and it fosters a greater appreciation in the community of what we do and how we do it. The more transparent we are about what we are doing, the more we will succeed."

BUSINESS MODEL

Donations sold in the ReStore pay administrative and overhead costs for the local Habitat for Humanity. In Prescott, the ReStore averages about \$12,000 in earnings each

week. That pays salaries, utilities and building rental. This means that 100 percent of all other donations go directly into building homes.

"The goal of the ReStore is to earn enough revenue to pay for all the staff, administrative fees, utilities and other overhead items," Janchik said. "At that point, when someone makes a donation, it goes directly into our building program."

Janchik said that while Habitat houses are built with a lot of volunteer labor, Habitat does employ individuals who procure land and who oversee the jobsite.

"We are basically a volunteer-driven organization," he said. "But at key points you have to have professional expertise to run the jobsite, to organize the volunteers and to essentially make the engine run."

Habitat has two or three home designs that are very consistent, which allows construction materials to be purchased in mass, thereby reducing costs. Because building the



Photo by Pia Wyr

John Ayers from Chino Valley said he always look at the ReStore first when he needs something, in preference to buying retail.



Photo by Pia Weyer

Gary Janchik, Prescott Re-Store director, looks at some new power tools recently donated by a Prescott business.

houses is “formula,” Janchik said most of the materials are purchased because donated materials are generally in smaller amounts.

“We want a consistent quality product,” Janchik said. “The homes we build are typically small, but they are very high quality. We build on low-cost property in viable areas that are close to town centers where people have their children in school.” He added that they are working hard to improve green building techniques to increase efficiency.

Janchik said Habitat has a stringent screening process for potential homeowners, including earnings limitations and a commitment to work hundreds of hours on the homes of others in the program. He said that “partnering” with Habitat is vital to the process. Families must commit to work on other people’s homes.

“The work is done on everyone’s home,” Janchik said. “So it’s not this selfish feeling of working totally for oneself. It’s a wonderful feeling that you are working through the community. You meet other homebuilders. They work on your home. That’s really what fuels the process.”

FAMILIES, HOMES

Many of the families who earn a Habitat home have never owned a home before.

Janchik said that part of the home ownership process is to teach prospective homeowners about how a

mortgage works, where the money is going and what they will achieve through home ownership.

Habitat for Humanity is the mortgage company. New homeowners receive a 30-year, zero percent mortgage, which is based on the home’s construction cost. For five years, Habitat holds the equity that accrues in the home. After the five-year period, the equity transfers to the homeowner and they can sell if they so choose. If the homeowners leave before the five-year period expires, they realize no equity.

“These are people who have typically had a difficult time financially and they want an opportunity to bring themselves up,” Janchik said. “It’s a hand up, not a hand out. We want a show of responsibility. We want to see their commitment to the program and making their payment on time each month.”

After a family is accepted into the Habitat program, the wait for a home could be as long as two years.

“It’s a long, drawn-out process that really tests the fortitude of the people who want to be engaged in it,” Janchik said. “The timeframe varies greatly depending on what we have on hand and how many volunteers are available. The economy also affects the process.”

He said that clearly the Habitat program is not for everyone and occasionally, people do fall out of the program. The process, he said, is designed to attract highly motivated people willing to put in their volunteer hours and

build homes for themselves and others.

“There’s no ambiguity about the process,” Janchik said. “We bring them through so that they understand every step of the way. They know what is expected. When someone is motivated to work on other people’s homes, it shows their willingness to partner with us and it’s that partnering that is a large part of what we are ultimately trying to achieve. We want them to be involved with the next generation of homeowners.”

Potential homeowners are not permitted to “pick and choose” which home they will move into, although Habitat does try to consider family roots.

“We try to offer them possibilities close to where their families are,” Janchik said. “We try to take into consideration where the children are in school. We want to try and keep them in that area.”

In 2008, the Prescott Area Habitat for Humanity passed the benchmark of building 50 homes. While the economy will ultimately dictate the building program for 2009, the organization has set a goal of eight new homes.

“The reason people want to be engaged with Habitat is far removed from what business transactions are,” Janchik said. “You really can’t put a dollar symbol on how good it feels to donate to someone who really needs your help. It’s almost a higher calling or a love for community that motivates people.”

To make a donation to a ReStore in your area, see the store listings at right for contact information.

Habitat Stores in Arizona

Cottonwood

Home Improvement ReStore
250 E. Cherry St. Ste. 1
Cottonwood, AZ 86326
Phone: (928) 649-6788

Flagstaff

Flagstaff HFH ReStore
1411 S. Milton Road
Flagstaff, AZ 86001
Phone: (928) 779-1314

Mesa

Mesa ReStore
1135 S. Dobson
Mesa, AZ 85202
Phone: (480) 969-2143

Payson

Payson Area HFH ReStore
403 S. Ash St.
Payson, AZ 85541
Phone: (928) 474-4247

Peoria

Habitat Home Improvement Store
9133 NW Grand Ave.
Peoria, AZ 85345
Phone: (623) 776-2287

Phoenix

Phoenix ReStore
115 East Watkins
Phoenix, AZ 85004
Phone: (602) 258-4196

Prescott

Prescott Area ReStore
1061 Commerce Drive
Prescott, AZ 86305
Phone: (928) 771-1777

Sierra Vista

Sierra Vista Area Habitat ReStore
1234 E. Fry Blvd.
Sierra Vista, AZ 85635
Phone: (520) 458-0016

Tucson

Tucson HabiStore
3840 S Palo Verde
Tucson, AZ 85714
Phone: (520) 889-7200

Wickenburg

Wickenburg Area HFH ReStore
370 Center St.
Wickenburg, AZ 85358
Phone: (928) 684-2220

Yuma

Habitat ReStore of Yuma
2325 S. Engler Ave. Ste. C
Yuma, AZ 85365
Phone: (928) 344-5788