



STARS Newsletter

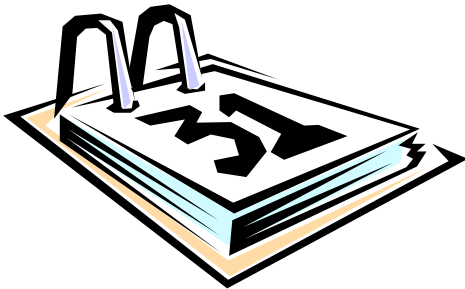
South Texas Association of Resale Shops

visit us at: www.starsresale.com

Feb/Mar 2010

Volume 20, Number 1

Mark Your Calendars



April 2010

Next printing of the *STARS* Newsletter. We welcome news or articles from *STARS* members. Contact the Editor, Pat Swartley, at pswartley@yahoo.com or by phone 281-338-9360.

June 25-28, 2010

NARTS Annual Conference designed for resale professionals, Ritz-Carlton Hotel, Palm Beach, Florida. Visit www.narts.org for more information.

October 2010

STARS Annual Meeting TBA

S.T.A.R.S celebrates 20 years

In the Fall of 1990 a group of resale shop owners met to discuss forming a resale association. At that first meeting we had over 40 people. Revered, now deceased, Toni Coleman led the group. We chose our name, the South Texas Association of Resale Shops (*S.T.A.R.S*) at that meeting. In 1991 we officially began *S.T.A.R.S* with a Board of Directors and Toni as President. Pat and Yolanda are among the Founding members.

Pat began our newsletter. Our first advertiser was Dwayne Stokes, owner of A-1 Store Fixtures, Inc. who has faithfully advertised every year since. Several years later we added Brian Wilson, owner of Visual Horizons and ConsignPro as an advertiser. We so appreciate their dedication to our organization!

Although we no longer publish a brochure, Yolanda has been hard at work getting our name and our members stores listed all over the Internet. She includes the statement, "Ask if a shop is a *S.T.A.R.S* member for professionalism in the resale industry." She is presently working on an on-line brochure. **All she needs is for you to email her your logo.**

We hope you will continue your membership in *S.T.A.R.S*



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About STARS...

The *STARS* Newsletter is published bi-monthly 6 times a year for Feb/Mar, April/May, June/July, Aug/Sept, Oct/Nov and Dec/Jan and is mailed to *STARS* members, prospective members and other interested persons.

STARS was founded in 1991 to promote education, networking, mentoring and co-op advertising among member.

Membership in *STARS* is open to “for-profit” resale/consignment shops in South Texas.

TO JOIN *STARS*: visit our website and click on “membership” for information.

***STARS* Volunteer Board Members are:**

Yolanda Ramirez
713-664-5219
Children’s Collections
5219 Bellaire Blvd.
Bellaire, TX 77401
childrenscollections@live.com

Roxanne Weideman
281-558-1793
Clothes for Kids
14520 Memorial Dr. #20
Houston, TX 77079

Official *STARS* address is:
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5219 Bellaire Blvd.
Bellaire, TX 77040

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LETTER FROM THE EDITOR.....

I have enjoyed talking to our long-time faithful members of *STARS*. (See pages 4 & 5 for a listing.) These stores have been in business over 15 years. What they have in common is a love of the resale business and an optimism for better times in the future. Some stores showed a modest profit last year, some stores were disappointed in their sales but said it could have been worse. Many of the stores said they were getting more and better quality merchandise than ever before. People are taking advantage of rock bottom retail sales to replace their old stuff?

Another trend is using the Internet more to generate sales. E-mail accounts for customers are increasing. A new twist is having a store Facebook account to get the message out about the newest and greatest merchandise just arrived. Marlo at Young & Restless also uses her store facebook account to hook up customers who have a great item with a customer who wants it. The sale is done in her store and the customers work out the details of transferring the merchandise. Other stores make use of Ebay to move their stuff.

As you have heard and read everywhere, record numbers shopped on-line for Christmas items and research has shown that most people were happy with the experience. Retailers really worked the customer service angle to encourage sales. This trend will only increase. Where does that leave resale shops? Why do people shop resale? What benefit do they get that beats the advantages of shopping on-line?

I asked this question of a few of our members. I got some interesting answers. Some people may not like this year’s fashions and prefer last season’s styles. Resale shops blend in the seasons more. Last week I could only find one men’s flannel shirt in my favorite retail store, but found a bunch in a resale shop. Today’s consumer is very price conscious and resale shops can still offer great finds for the shopper who has the time to visit. Since people are saving so much time shopping on line maybe they’ll have more time for us! What strikes fear in a resale shop owners heart? A customer who says the prices are too high for a resale shop. **Pre-owned stuff is only worth what someone is willing to pay.**

And take a page from the on-line retailers—make 2010 the year you REALLY care about customer service.

Your Editor, Pat Swartley



MAKE SURE YOUR CUSTOMER OR CONSIGNOR ALWAYS WINS

No matter what you've heard, the customer isn't always right, but that doesn't mean you should be the one to tell them! A better line to live by might be, "THE CUSTOMER ALWAYS WINS," because if they don't, they most likely will not continue to do business with you.

Establish a customer service standard for your employees to follow that is designed to engender loyalty from each customer. As a business owner, you have to be an evangelist for your customer service standard, and also its chief enforcer. Be prepared to hire and fire based on customer service performance. Periodic evaluations should focus on your employee's customer service performance. Make sure employees truly represent your company and its image.

You should evaluate customer service continually. Encourage your customers to help by offering on-line reviews of your shop and giving them "evaluation dollars" for their input which they can exchange for merchandise in the shop. (Ed note: remember the famous "clothing bucks" idea?). The main idea with the bucks was to give something "free" which costs less than say, giving 20% or more in a discount.

Compare your customer service to other resale shops and especially to stores outside your industry to get ideas on improving it.

(Yolanda contributed to this article by attending a SCORE meeting for small business owners. Thank You!)

WHAT DO YOUR CUSTOMERS LIKE ABOUT YOUR STORE? *Is Customer Service near the top of the list?*

Frequently, you or your employees can find this out in casual conversation with people in the store, but if you REALLY want to know, you need the on-line survey mentioned above or a written survey handed out in the store. Ask customers to fill out your survey in exchange for "evaluation dollars" and create a "dollar" certificate they can use as money anytime. Hopefully they will put it in their wallet with other bills to use the next time they come in. However you decide they can redeem the dollar(s), it creates excitement and good feeling about your shop.

Keep your survey simple and easy to fill out. "What is the number one reason you choose to shop at (your store name)? Ask for #2 and #3 reason, also, because you could get as a first reason, "It is the closest resale shop to my house." How many responses do you get for "good customer service?"

Another good question is how they found out about your store. Location? Referral? A particular advertising venue? Consider adding a "comment" section.



Dear Resale Queen,

I am a sole owner of my resale shop. Would it be better for me to incorporate? Or should I remain as I am?

Signed: Just wondering

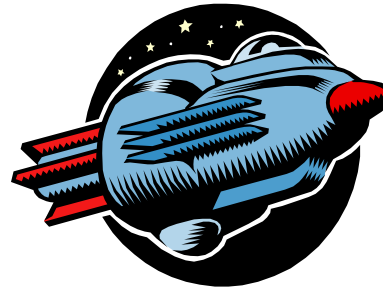
Dear Wondering,

That is a very good question and one that you should discuss with a business attorney or an accounting professional who can determine if incorporating is right for your situation and which type is best for a resale shop. There are many choices in the state of Texas.

That said, here are a few things to consider before making the change. 1. Will you be paying lower taxes? A solo Proprietor married to a high income tax bracket partner and filing jointly, will pay the same tax rate on the store profit. A corporation tax could be significantly lower. 2. How much will it cost to change? It can be very expensive. Be careful who you pick to do the incorporation paperwork. 3. How long do you plan to stay in business? I closed my shop 2 years after incorporating and it was not worth the cost. 4. What rules and terms do you have to follow when incorporated?

The main advantage of incorporating besides possibly paying lower taxes is the legal protection to your personal assets.

The RESALE QUEEN



News Around the Galaxy

STARS wishes to thank our long standing members who have so faithfully supported our organization since our early years. A huge THANK YOU from Yolanda and Pat and all our members who have benefited from your support.

Alabama Furniture

Owner: Sherri Enroth

2200 Yale, Houston, 77008
(713)862-3035

Opened 18 years ago.

New store in Galveston:

2120-A Post Office St., 77550
(409)766-7030

www.alabamafurniture.com

Designers Furniture Exchange

Owner: Mike Frank; Douglas Marks, Mgr.

5701 Richmond, Houston 77057
(713)781-9394

Expanded to 11,000 sq ft 5 years ago. Sells high end River Oaks consignments.

www.designersfurnitureexchange.com

2nd Debut Furniture Resale

Owner: Charles Gray; Jerry Jones, Mgr.

10968 Westheimer, Houston 77042
(713)782-0300

Same location, third owner. Business is "wonderful"

Twice New

Owner: Rena Karash, 2nd owner

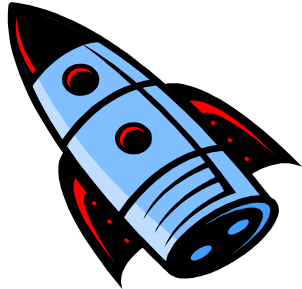
2005-D W. Gray, Houston 77019
(713)523-2212

Open for over 22 years, original employee Barbara Kunec is still there! Renovated one week before Hurricane IKE, but no damage.

www.twicenew.com



News Around the Galaxy.....cont.



La Boutique **Owner: Barry Bravman**

3159-B Hwy 6, Sugarland
(281)980-7600

*Owner since 1997,
appears on Channel 26
several times a year to
promote resale.*

Encore!

Owner: Terry Ramin; Michael Jones, Mgr.

1852 Fountainview
Houston, 77057
713-334-9327

www.encorehouston.com

*Moved last April to
better location. Selling
fall/winter 40% off
now.*

A Lot of Panache

18339 Egret Bay Blvd.
Houston 77058
(281)333-2967

Owner: Pat Broxson

*Store is the oldest and best
ladies resale shop in the
Bay Area.*

Act 11 **Owner: Gloria Arevalo since 2004**

8415 Stella Link
Houston 77025
713-664-4044

*Ladies clothing. Accepting
better labels. Loyal custom-
ers give them referrals and
mothers drop kids off at gym
and shop.*

Clothes For Kids Resale

Owner: Roxanne Weiderman

14520 Memorial Dr #20
Houston, 77079
(281) 558-1793

*Original owner since 1973,
same location., sells
newborn to size 16.*

Crayons Childrens Resale

Owner: Gail Roben

15969 Westheimer,
Houston 77082
(281) 556-9086

*New owner for 2
years, has recently
expanded to 6,000
square feet, Now
adding new
mattresses.*

Second Childhood

Owner: Shelly Horwitz

1922 Fountainview, Houston
(713) 789-6456

*Nice website. Now
accepting spring
and summer.*

www.secondchildhoodtexas.com

Young and Restless

Owner: Marlo McClung

New location (late Feb)
3468 Ella Blvd
Houston 77018
(Ella Plaza)
(713)861-7647

*Was an employee for
11 years, owner for
2 years, Having good
success with store
Facebook sales.*

Little Bo-tique

Owner: Amy Levick

913 Nasa Parkway, 77058
(281) 286-0034

*Celebrating 15 years.
Learned the business
in her mother's
store, A Lot of
Panache*

www.littlebo-tique.net

Ladies-n-kidz Reruns

Owner: Kim Gill, second owner & location

5032 FM 2920, Spring
(281) 353-4544

*In business for about
13 years. Misses the
publication of our
brochure.*

www.kidzreruns.com

Retail Therapy

Owner: Kim Smith

(formerly Box of Chocolate)
10782 Grant Road
Houston 77070
(281) 955-0806

*Store now sells
furniture, home
decor, added to
clothing for ladies,
teens & kids*