



# STARS Newsletter

South Texas Association of Resale Shops  
visit us at: [www.starsresale.com](http://www.starsresale.com)

Oct/Nov 2005

Volume 15, Number 5

## MARK YOUR CALENDARS



**FLASH** As we go to press Jacke Shipwash, the publisher of the STARS Official Directory, says the Directory was delayed because of Hurricane Rita, but will be delivered "ASAP," if you haven't already received it.

### October 2005

Annual STARS meeting Sunday, October 16th, Second Childhood on Fountainview.

*Annual dues renewal notices mailed.*

### December 2005

December 31, Membership dues must be in to maintain listing on the website.

### March 2006

1<sup>st</sup> printing of the Official STARS Directory.

## STARS Annual Meeting

Date: Sunday, October 16<sup>th</sup>

Time: 2-5 pm

Place: Second Childhood  
1922 Fountainview  
Houston, TX 77057

Phone: 713-789-6456

Hostess: Yolanda Ramirez

Reservations are not required to attend, but Yolanda would appreciate a call so she can plan how to roll her racks around to make enough space. Please bring a chair for you and any guests. If you can't do this, call Tressa at Crayons Children's Resale and ask her to bring one for you. Her number is: 281-556-9086.

What do we do at the Annual Meeting? Beginning at 2 pm we meet and greet everyone. This is also a good time to look around the shop to pick up ideas for YOUR shop. And you may shop for the little ones in your family. About 2:30 we get organized to begin our meeting. Introductions and information about your shop is the first order of business. Also on the program is educational information from the NARTS Conference held in June, and a time for networking and problem solving ideas. We always run out of time before we get all talked out, so for those interested we will then adjourn to a nearby restaurant for further discussions.

The meeting is open to members, prospective members, STARlets, family and employees.

## Inside This Issue

President's Letter.....	page 2
Meet successful STARS.....	page 3
The Future of Resale.....	page 4
Welcome New Starlets & STARS...	page 5



## 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, STARlets and other interested persons.

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

Membership in STARS is open to any for-profit resale shop in business for 1 year or more in the Greater Houston area. 2005 Membership dues are \$50 per year and new members are accepted at any time. STARlet provisional membership is offered to new resale shops in business less than 1 year. STARlets enjoy most benefits of membership for free.

STAR membership provides the opportunity to have a listing on the S T A R S w e b s i t e , [www.starsresale.com](http://www.starsresale.com). You may also place a website link for a one time fee of \$50. Contact STARS at 281-338-9360.

The bi-annual Official STARS Directory is published in March and September. For information please call publisher, Jacke Shipwash at 1-409-927-1295.

STARS volunteer board members are: President, Pat Swartley, 281-338-9360; Vice President, Kelsey Smith, Sassy Town, 281-852-1774; Sec/Treas, Yolanda Ramirez, Second Childhood on Fountainview, 713-789-6456.

STARS Newsletter Writer/Editor:

**Pat Swartley**

Layout/graphics: **Karen Frerking**

Advertising is accepted.

Members may advertise in a classified section free.

## *PRESIDENTS LETTER:*

I have come full circle. It was about this time last year that I began to consider my options toward giving up my store, The Clothes Basket. You know the rest of the story how I decided to give it to a charity. It has taken a year to complete this mission. I agreed to stay on as an employee for the last 6 months to help with the transfer, and to train the volunteers. It was a wonderful experience to work with a bunch of terrific ladies who not only appreciated my generous gift, but who also appreciated my teaching them how to tag clothes and all the other little daily resale shop chores. My 6 months came to an end in September and it was very easy to walk out of the door. I had had a year to let go and there was no choking up as I walked out of THEIR store.

What are my thoughts today? I am so grateful for the 20 wonderful years I spent as a resale shop owner. Wait a minute—was it ALL wonderful? No, it wasn't, come to think about it. There were the good times and tough times. How did I get through them? How does any resale shop owner get through them? Well, I'm going to tell you how on page 3 from interviewing some of the STARS long-time members and on page 4 too.

Being able to pick and plan your retirement exit to the best advantage is also a wonderful experience. Most people would prefer to sell at a good price, take the money and walk away. Few people achieve that dream. The majority of shop owners who sell end up taking whatever the buyer is willing to pay which is always less than their perceived value or worth of their store. Selling the business property and shutting down is the third choice in exiting a business. One shop owner told me the aggravation of shutting down was so great she wished she'd taken the last offer on her shop, pitiful as it seemed at the time.

My exit was unique and very rewarding to me personally. A lot of people have expressed their delight and even disbelief that I would give my store away. Not everyone can "get it." Put it in the category of there are some things money can't buy, or money isn't everything.

And I bet the next question on everyone's mind is: Well, Pat what are you going to do NOW? And my answer would be: What would you THINK? I plan to do more of what I love to do, which is visiting resale shops, shopping, talking and writing about my experiences. It is my goal to visit every STAR shop within the next year. I'll call first! I also look forward to sitting down with Mike Najera, our web master, to discuss some up-grades and improvements to our STARS website.

Keep the faith and work toward a great fall. Please renew your membership so we can continue to be one of the biggest and best resale associations in the country!

**Pat Swartley**



### What STARS are doing to stay successful by Pat Swartley

I thought it would be interesting to talk to STARS who have been faithful members for a long time and to ask them what, in their opinion, has enabled them to survive and to enjoy some measure of success as well?

Yolanda at **Second Childhood** on Fountainview, is a charter member of STARS and has enjoyed over 15 years in business, with most of those years at her old location on Voss. She said she believes her success is due to her previous retail experience, and for sure, her store looks like a retail store and she runs it like a retail store. Her customers receive the best in customer service. We'll pick her brain at the STARS meeting!

Toby at **Perfectly Good Gently Used Etc.**, kidded around with me. She credited her longevity to being "crazy." I said, "Come on, Toby, what else?" She said, "it helps to own your own building so you don't have to worry about the rent going up." For sure, the two biggest budget items, rent and employees, can have a serious impact on the bottom line. An important sideline is her Internet selling business. She has a special room in her house to handle it. If she HAD rent to pay this income would pay for it.

Tressa at **Crayons Children's Resale** is coming to the STARS Annual meeting and she shared her number one tip: Deliver great customer service. "Take care of your customers and they will take care of you", she said. Get to know them and engage in "warm chatter." Stay-at-home moms are hungry for adult conversation. Other tips are to put out a good product, reasonably priced to keep customers coming back.. Tressa will share some of her VIP customer special events ideas at the Annual Meeting. Got chairs? If not, call her if you need a chair at the meeting.

Debbie, long time Manager at **The Consignors' Club**, very quickly said the reason for their longevity and success is their attention to customer service. Every customer receives personal contact the minute they walk in the door. Their wants and needs are carefully attended to. Relationship marketing—building relationships with your customers—is the trend in today's retail environment. Doris is the owner.

Sherri at **Alabama Furniture**, echoed the importance of customer service as well. She joked that several of her customers come in every week for their "free therapy" sessions. Sherrie credits her success of over 10 years to her continuing to up-grade the quality of the product she sells which also allowed her to increase prices. By the way, her baby daughter's sitter is Beth Zeffert, formerly the owner of Beth's Closets.

Bill at **2<sup>nd</sup> Debut Furniture**, managed the store since its' beginning in the early 1990s and became the owner about 3 years ago. He brought extensive knowledge as a collector of fine and antique furniture to his position. Russell, his son, credits this ability to decide what to take on consignment as a big reason for their success. They have also created a steady base of customers over the years also because they offer advice where rejected items may be taken for donation or to another shop where they might sell better.

Bill is an ordained minister and has a lot of experience in prison ministry. Russell also works with a street people ministry and says people come into their store with furniture and spiritual needs which they try to meet. God has blessed their store and ministry.

Russell recently gave their extra copies of the STARS Directory to directors of housing for the Katrina victims. This is such a good idea STARS hopes you will distribute your left over directories to locations where Katrina victims are to help them find furniture and clothing needs.

Hurricane Rita forced a deadline that prevented me from calling more STARS for this article. We have quite a few STARS members who have been with us 10 years or more. Look for their names in the next issue coming in December and look for more comments on why they have been in business this long.



### The Future of Resale

One thing is certain: the resale industry is tied to the retail industry. Many economic factors influence the retail industries growth or lack of it and these factors trickle down to us too. The more successful stores tend to be stores who could find a particular niche of product appeal, or were new start-ups. And for sure, delivering exceptional customer service was an important key.

Without calling anyone I already know that September has to be one of the worst months this year for a lot of you. Rita took care of that with a week lost in sales. If that wasn't bad enough the Houston Chronicle reported that in September consumer confidence dropped a record 19 points for the biggest fall in 15 years. This translated to fewer shoppers out there during the month to start with. Remember last year when we got deep concerns over gas prices topping \$1.50 a gallon and how that might impacted sales? Gas prices will rise to double that and more. That means less consumer dollars available for everyone including us. I have seen no evidence that when people have less money to spend they run to resale shops.

In my 20 years in the resale industry I have had periods of sleepless nights worrying about where all the customers went and how I was going to pay the rent. During these times our retail cousins were suffering too.

I haven't said all this to discourage you but to give you a heads up on what is happening and what you can do about it. A lot of new store owners I have talked to over the years come into this business all excited because they love owning their own business and they love resale and they love the product they are going to sell and they think having an attractive store and being friendly to customers is all it takes to succeed in business. It takes that as a start, for sure.

**It always annoyed me that just having a nice store, a good product priced reasonably, and a good attitude with customers wasn't enough to get the sales I needed to make the whole venture worthwhile.** It always took a lot of effort to decide what my customers wanted and didn't want in terms of product and service, and a lot of work to determine the best ways to reach and keep new customers. As I attended workshops at the NARTS Conferences over the years I saw that successful resale shop owners were obsessed with these concerns also. They were working as hard as me to find the answers. They looked for creative solutions to these concerns and took action. On the sidebar I have listed some of the ideas that have helped NARTS members succeed in business.

- 1. Add a new product or service.** Favorite additions were new purchased items such as jewelry and handbags, gift items or children's accessories items, and consigned home décor and small furniture items. Better service to consignors could be picking up items from better consignors or prospective good consignors.
- 2. Give your regular, loyal retail customers the VIP treatment.** Single them out for special rewards or in-store special events. Use "key tags" or "punch cards" that allow special discounts or services any time they shop.
- 3. Develop a direct mail and email base of customers who want to be contacted by you.** Divide the lists into regular retail, VIP retail, consignors and VIP consignors.
- 4. Beware of signing up for expensive forms of advertising or promotions such as billboards, TV, Radio or large phone book ads without careful research, and the funds to pay for it easily.** A common financial mistake is to assume expensive advertising will create big profits. Don't sign a contract for anything you can't easily afford now.
- 5. Cheapest best advertising is "bag flyers" or handouts about your store and up-coming sales or promotions.** Insert these flyers in check payments also and hand out in the community whenever possible.

### Time To Renew Your STARS Membership

Later this month the renewal notices will be mailed to you with a stamped return envelope. Please review the form for correct information about your store so that we can make any changes necessary to the STARS web site. Please check your listing on the website now and make note of any changes you want. If you want to add information about an email or your store's website address, these changes are also made at no charge to you. Links to your website from your STARS listing is also available at a cost of only \$50 (a one time fee).



## Welcome New STARlets

Our Starlet program reaches out to new resale shops in business less than a year. We offer them a packet of information to help them grow their business, invite them to our annual meeting, put them on the mailing list for the newsletter, and encourage them to meet our members for more help and information. We are pleased to report that some of our Starlets report back that our members have most graciously helped them.

After a Starlet has been in business a year they may become official STARS members. They then begin paying membership dues, get a listing on the STARS web site and may advertise in the Official STARS Directory.

### Riverbridge Resale & Consignment

6390A Hwy 105 W  
Conroe TX 77304  
Phone: 936-756-5020 email: riverbridge@consolidated.net

**Owner, Kay George, met me at the NARTS Conference in June and recently signed up through the STARS web site. The store, open since November 2004, sells furniture/home accessories/antiques. Two Timers Resale**

803 E. Nasa Parkway, #134  
Webster TX 77598  
Phone: 281-480-7998 email: dmsolutions@houston.rr.com

Owners, Lynn and Pete Laurell opened up a few months ago in the Challenger Plaza. They will sell juniors and ladies clothing and accessories on consignment.

### Boaters' Resale Shop

1206A FM 2094 (Marina Bay Drive)  
Kemah TX 77565 (a few blocks east of STARlet Nu-Once)  
Phone: 713-614-8884 email: paul.yirga@virtual-harbormaster.com and check his website  
[www.boatersresaleshopoftexas.com](http://www.boatersresaleshopoftexas.com)

Owner, Paul Yirga, opened in January 2005 and sells all kinds of boat accessories and equipment and small boats. I visited him recently and was very impressed with his set-up even though I am a fish out of water when it comes to boat stuff. This is what Paul does that is so right. First of all, he is a boater and a retired Captain who knows his product. Second, he has a great location by being in the middle of one of the largest concentrations of pleasure boats in the country, and he is the ONLY boat resale shop. He has product knowledge, location and niche locked up.

Next, he has market savvy. His shop name says what he is and he regularly advertises in the 2 leading boaters' publications in the area to reach his niche market. Having lived and boated in the area of his store for many years, he has lots of boater and boat business friends. A call to them when he opened his shop brought in lots of merchandise for his opening. They help also with word of mouth advertising. He has a great flyer that is distributed around the area and put up on bulletin boards in the many boat marinas around town. Then there is his utility trailer with a big sign on it parked by the road, and great signage on the front of the store.

How does Paul get merchandise? He has had good luck at garage sales in the area, buys outright whenever a great opportunity presents itself, and he buys selected merchandise on eBay. He knows his market of most needed and sellable items. Consignment is another option and how he handles that is a good topic for another article in the December issue. Paul also gives some potential consignors the opportunity to put their items on eBay. His store is fully computerized and all products have neat price tags.

## Welcome New STARS Member

**Sunday's Child**  
410 W. Main Street  
League City, TX 77573  
Phone: 281-338-5439

Owner, Andrea Palker, opened April 04 and sells maternity, children's clothing, toys, accessories and some furniture. Look for Sunday's Child's ad in the Fall STARS Directory.

## LOOK INSIDE FOR THE LATEST S.T.A.R.S. DIRECTORY INFORMATION



**VISUAL HORIZONS SOFTWARE**  
Software for Small Business

BRIAN WILSON, Principal  
100 Lincoln Road, Suite P-7  
Miami Beach, FL 33139

sales: (888) 721-9767  
support: (305) 535-0959  
email: sales@vhssoftware.com  
www.vhssoftware.com



Carolyn Wagner  
Manager  
MaximInsurance

217 E. Main - P.O. Box 751  
League City, TX 77574

281.332.3413 phone  
281.332.8191 fax

cwagner@maximinsurance.com  
www.maximinsurance.com

BANKING | INSURANCE | INVESTMENTS

**Gulf Coast Computer** 

3129 HWY 6  
Hitchcock, TX 77563

Located in the Bayou Vista Shopping Center  
Custom Built Computers \* Upgrades \* Repairs  
Websites \* Internet Service \* Hosting

**409.935.9544**

Gondola Shelving  
Metal Shelving  
Pallet Racks  
Brackets  
Counters

Showcases  
Pegboard Hooks  
Clothes Racks  
Bunkers

**A-1 STORE FIXTURES**  
**We Buy and Sell All Types of Store  
Fixtures**

Dwayne Stokes  
713-699-4350

5 Berry Road  
Houston, Texas 77022

S.T.A.R.S. Newsletter  
C/O Pat Swartley  
2206 Waters Edge Ln.  
League City, TX 77573

**First Class Mail**  
**Address Correction Requested**



**A PUBLICATION OF THE SOUTH TEXAS ASSOCIATION OF RESALE SHOPS**