

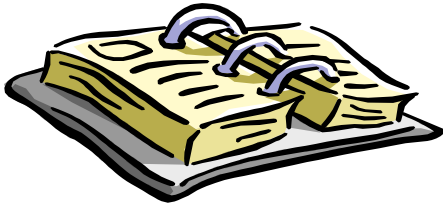


STARS News-

April/May 2009

Volume

Mark Your Calendars



June 1, 2009

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 26-29, 2009 Scottsdale, AZ

NARTS annual conference at the Hyatt Regency Scottsdale Resort and Spa. For information visit their website, www.narts.org. STARS is not affiliated with NARTS but we recommend them as a valuable source of Resale/consignment shop information.

IMPORTANT MESSAGE FROM NARTS

The National Association of Resale & Thrift Shops is conducting a CPSIA Impact Cyber Survey for the purpose of gathering statistics to use in their continued fight to reform CPSIA.

This survey is open to anyone in the industry who sells (or sold children's products prior to CPSIA.)

"Our goal is to get as MANY responses as possible. There is a link to the survey right in the CPSIA information page accessible from the (NARTS) home page, www.narts.org.

Please contact any resale, consignment or thrift stores you know who sell or sold children's products including any stores that closed due to CPSIA. Send them to the NARTS website to participate in the survey.

THANK YOU IN ADVANCE FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION! ----The Editor

FOR SALE: Heavy duty clothes rolling rack. \$50. Contact Patty or Nancy at Upscale Resale in LaPorte at **281.471.1290** or cell **713.906.8117**

Have you visited the STARSRESALE.COM site recently?

You may check your listing on the site to be sure the information is accurate. Any changes? Want to link your website to your listing? Contact Yolanda at childrenscollections@live.com Your store is no longer listed? Oops, you forgot to pay your annual dues of \$50? Remember all dues go for maintaining our website and supporting our newsletter costs. (The Editor is not paid, by the way.) **FLASH! Yolanda just informed me stores with unpaid dues have amnesty until April 30th!!**

Also on the website is past newsletters, other articles by the RESALE QUEEN and important links to other resale resources, including the NARTS website.

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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.

Membership is only \$50 a year and entitles a member to a listing on the STARS website, www.starsresale.com, a copy of the newsletter published 6 times a year, and an invitation to advertise in our annual STARS Official Directory which is printed each June.

We invite our members to link their shop website to their listing on the STARS website. No additional hosting fee is charged. A free email account is also available.

TO JOIN STARS: visit our website and click on “membership” for information. Print and fill out the membership forms and mail with a check for \$50 payable to STARS, to the STARS official address below.

STARS Volunteer Board Members are:

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

Roxanne Weiderman, 281-558-1793.
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Letter from the editor...

“Consignment Shops back in vogue as shoppers

look to stretch their dollars”—CNN, March 17. At last we are able to benefit from a down economy.

Never in the history of resale have so many news sources been out there promoting resale. We couldn’t afford to pay for all the free PR we have gotten. Has that helped the resale industry? In a recent survey of members, NARTS says it has. Everyone I talk to in the business is no longer complaining. I often hear remarks from “**business is good**” to “**it is better.**” Yet, some shops say they are just happy to still be in business.

A recent article in the March NARTS Network Newsletter written by Patti Acquisto, a resale industry icon with three decades of resale experience, puts our situation in perspective: Are you “Thriving or Surviving?” she asks. She views this year as a tremendous opportunity to thrive; after all, all the blocks are in place: great PR for the industry, and public attention to spend wisely. And added to that is the fact that more people are heading to the resale shops to make money on their stuff. Her encouraging article tells us not to settle for merely surviving, but to set goals to thrive.

A quote from her article: “Thriving means taking bold steps, making courageous decisions, eliminating some things and adding others. Thriving means taking a hard look at payroll, staffing, merchandising, pricing, advertising procedures and all areas of business that can be improved.” Evidence of **thriving** over just **surviving** is seeing more retail and consignment customers walking in the door, and more sales!

Is everyone pumped up? If you really want to get pumped up I suggest you look into attending the June NARTS Conference in Scottsdale, AZ. They offer 28 workshops that pretty much cover any resale issue you may have, and much more. Visit their website, www.narts.org for complete info.

I encourage you to do more than just surviving this year.

May this year be one of your best!

The Editor, **Pat Swartley**



SCORE, Counselors to America's Small Business

In 1992 during another down economic time, when I had to borrow on an insurance policy and ask my sister for a loan, your Editor met with a **SCORE** Counselor. Of course I cannot remember a single piece of advice offered to me, but I do remember feeling a lot better about my situation and I got a good perspective on what I needed to do to survive.

Experienced **SCORE** mentors, experts in all fields of business; never in the business of trying to sell you anything, are funded by the Federal Government and their services are free to you.

I suggest you visit their website, www.scorehouston.org to see how they can help you protect your business today and come out of this recession even stronger. Remember, don't just settle for surviving—plan to thrive. You will find information on their website to find a **SCORE** location near you. Houston **SCORE** and Capital Banks have teamed together to offer a series of free seminars and networking events on the subject: "Surviving the Tough Times." Check out dates and locations nearest you.

On the website you will find the **SCORE** BizSuccess Newsletter. Be sure to sign up to receive it monthly to keep you motivated with new ideas on how to grow your business. The Editor, Bob Presley, has this advice to those of you struggling to keep the doors open:

"Above all, in times like these, attitude is everything. Don't get discouraged. Keep your chin up, work hard and work smart. As one observer put it, "Contrary to reports, the future has not been cancelled."

Here are a few tips from their March 2009 e-newsletter article, "**Five Recession Pitfalls to Avoid**".

Pitfall #1. Cutting expenses too slowly. Best to make a bold decision to cut expenses across the board to conserve cash flow now. Cutting down little by little doesn't really impact the cash flow or help you conserve cash.

Pitfall #2. Maintaining the same product and service mix. Because we in the resale industry are somewhat at the mercy of our consignment suppliers, it makes sense to constantly evaluate what is selling and what is not and then to stop accepting the stuff that is consistently still sitting there after a consignment period. Customers keep walking out without buying? Ask them what they are looking for. Call existing customers and ask them what they need. Buying needs change in down times.

Pitfall #3. Reducing marketing instead of focusing on marketing. How many times have you heard me harp about that one? In a weak economy where you are competing for fewer customers, the company that stands tall, strong and visible in the market place has the edge in attracting new customers and retaining the old ones. I didn't say spend a lot of money. Join a committee like Yolanda, who looks successful and talks and walks successful. Join networking groups, do a fundraiser for a charity, and get free PR anyway you can. Do you need that huge ad in the phone book? Say no to the guy selling ads on a pizza box. (I lost a lot of money doing that promotion.)

Pitfalls #4 and #5. dwell on **YOU**. Free up your time for the important stuff. Don't sweat the small stuff that makes you miss great business opportunities. Focus on business strategy and let your employees or volunteers do the work. Work smarter and not harder. Develop a support system to help you see the broad picture. My STARS friends kept me in business with their support and invaluable advice. Network with your STARS sisters and brothers!



Dear Resale Queen,

I own a resale shop. What can I do to make sure my business stays afloat even if the economy isn't in such great shape?

Signed: Surviving Resale shop owner

Dear Survivor,

I feel your pain. During my 20 years in the business there were times I felt lucky just to be in open. You must plan for survival during the good times. Make sure your credit is good by paying bills on time and if possible, establish a line of credit with a lending institution for those times you can't pay the bills. If you have established a good relationship with your vendors they will be more inclined to work with you on paying their bill, while continuing to supply you. It helps to have a rich relative as back up for a poor cash flow. You think I am kidding? Once I even borrowed on an insurance policy. Yeah, I did.

But when the good times happened, I remembered the bad times and put money aside in CD's and the money market and established a line of credit. And I maintained my good relationship with the rich relative, and paid off the insurance policy loan. **The main reason any small business fails is from lack of cash flow, or they had a nasty landlord who forced them out.**

It is hard to think of how to thrive when you can barely survive, but you must look toward the light and plan for the future and better days. This positive attitude and approach to your business will lighten your anxiety, and give you hope.

Dear Resale Queen,

What do you think is the most important reason a resale business thrives?

Signed: Just wondering

Dear Wondering,

It's the customer, stupid. It is all about them. Is your store full of stuff they want to buy? Do you have efficient methods to take their money or their consignment merchandise? Do you make them feel like VIP's? Do you have a reputation of honesty? Talk to any storeowner of a well-established, long-standing resale shop and they will tell you the same—they care about satisfied customers and they make it happen.

Dear Resale Queen,

How can I stop shoplifting in my store?

Signed: Tired of it.

Dear Tired,

Easy. Watch the old ladies. I am serious. White women over 50 are one of the most common offenders. Sadly, your own employees may be, also. Our present economic woes will encourage even more offenders.

The professional shoplifter comes with special talents known as "crotch walking" or carries tiny clippers to cut off security tags. They wear special clothing or carry items to help conceal merchandise. They know which camera is real or fake. They have been known to steal a fur coat chained to the wall behind the sales counter! You have little or no protection from them other than really good customer service. The average shoplifter steals on impulse and is caught on average only once out of 45 sprees. Some customers will buy something and steal too. I wonder if this helps their conscience? Once in my store a retired white lady tried to make a 2-piece suit a 3-piece suit by cutting the tag off the blouse. Always list the number of items in a particular purchase.

The Resale Queen



NEWS AROUND THE GALAXY.....



NEW MEMBER

Texas Tots Resale
12470 Hwy 6
Santa Fe, TX 77510
Phone: 409-316-2255
email: texastotsresale@hotmail.com
Website: www.texastots.net

Owner, Christine Gimpel, sells children's merchandise, maternity, and nursery equipment. Christine has about 1,000 sq ft of selling space. Open since May 2005, She works alone and is open Tues, Weds and Friday 10-6 pm, Thurs until 7 pm, Sat till 4 pm Closed Sun and Mon. She accepts consignments daily. Check out her website for more information.

Christine developed the love of resale at an early age from her mother dragging her around to local thrift, resale and antique shops, and when she raised her 4 children and retired from Bp she turned to resale as a career.

STARS welcomes you to membership, Christine. As a member of STARS, know that our members (find them on the website) are happy to mentor you and send referrals.

Yolanda shared with me that recently 6 ladies were in her store from the League City, Friendswood area south of Houston. These ladies worked in Houston and found her shop on the Internet through Google. (Do you know why new customers come into your shop?) Yolanda, in true STARS tradition of promoting other STARS, took time to inform the ladies about our shops in the Bay Area. She gave them the website information and the latest STARS Directory, also. It is interesting to note that a lot of people in the Bay Area work in Houston and shop there as well. Yolanda continually distributes our directory around drop offs in the Houston area. More information about our next Directory is coming.

Free Marketing tip from Yolanda, “get involved with your local community activities.”

What a great opportunity to mix and mingle with potential customers. She recently served on a committee for the Bellaire Home Tour (her shop is in Bellaire) and was able to promote her store among the 200 volunteers, some of them already customers. **Editor note: another favorite way to get your store promoted is to do style shows for ladies organizations.**

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



S.T.A.R.S. Newsletter
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League City, TX 77573

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Address Correction Requested



A PUBLICATION OF THE SOUTH TEXAS ASSOCIATION OF RESALE SHOPS
Since 1991