



STARS Newsletter

South Texas Association of Resale Shops
visit us at: www.starsresale.com

August/September 2006

Volume 16, Number 4

Mark Your Calendars



September 2006--Delivery of the fall *STARS* Official Directory

If you haven't been contacted or have any questions, please call the publisher, Jacke Shipwash at 409.927.1295 or email at shipwash1@verizon.net. Remember, payment for participation in the Directory is due when you receive an invoice, and not upon delivery. Please work with Jacke so she can pay the printer!

October 1, 2006--Next mail-out of the *STARS* Newsletter-We welcome news of interest to members. Contact Editor, Pat Swartley, at 281-338-9360 or email p_swartley@yahoo.com

**Sunday, October 22, 2006 @ 1 PM-----
STARS Annual Meeting**

December 31st--Annual Membership dues of \$50 must be paid to keep website listing

March 2007--Spring delivery of the *STARS* Official Directory

Make Plans to Attend *STARS* Annual Meeting

October is usually one of the best months of the year for resale and we know that you will be exhausted from ringing up all those sales and processing all those consignment items, but we hope you will take off a few hours on a pleasant Sunday Afternoon to kick back with some of your peers to share ideas, concerns and to just get to know one another in general. After every meeting you will find attendees leaving with handouts and lots of ideas for their business.

Our Hostess this year is **Tina Campbell, owner of Designer Consignor**. Her store sells new and consignment ladies and junior clothing. We appreciate Tina volunteering for this task and we are sure you will love to look around her store for great ideas and to shop for a bargain. We will also enjoy light refreshments and lots of fellowship when we arrive at 1 pm. **Reservations are not required, but we do ask that you notify Tina at least a week before the meeting if you will be attending, so she can make space for you. It is also a good idea to bring your own chair!** We will have more information in the next newsletter, but meanwhile check out Tina's website www.mydesignerconsignor.com

Designer Consignor is Located in Kingwood, TX, north of Houston. The address is: 2614B Chestnut Ridge Dr. Phone: 281-359-8002. email: designer-consignor@earthlink.net

Our Annual Meeting is open to members, *STAR*lets, employees, family members, and prospective members. DON'T MISS IT !

Your Editor,
Pat Swartley

Inside This Issue

Letter from the Editor.....	page 2
Kate Holmes' 101 best tips.....	page 3
Eight Steps to Success.....	page 4
New Members and <i>STAR</i> lets....	page 5
Is Your Customer Data Secure?..	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. 2006 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 *STARS* website, www.starsresale.com. You may also place a website link for a one time fee of \$50. Contact *STARS* at 713-789-6456.

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: Yolanda Ramirez and Sandra Marin, Second Childhood on Fountainview, 713-789-6456.

STARS Newsletter Writer/

Editor:

Pat Swartley

281-338-9360

Layout/graphics:

Karen Frerking

Advertising is accepted.
Members may advertise
in a classified section free.

Letter from the editor...

Hardly a week goes by that I don't receive a call from a *STAR* or *STARlet* telling me that the summer doldrums have descended on some of Houston's best resale shops. I haven't heard from a storeowner who has said, "I'm having my best summer, ever!" If you are out there, give me a call, please! And share some tips for the rest of us.

If you have been disappointed with sales this summer, or the whole year for that matter, then you are not alone. As I have told you many times—it takes a lot of constant effort to keep all the balls of good customer service and effective marketing up in the air, but never let up trying to discover new ways to give better service or get new customers. And if you come up with a hot idea that really works for you, come share it at the Annual Meeting in October, or give me a call.

Check out a sampling of Kate's 101 tips to be a better store on page 3. One of the best tips is to talk to your good, loyal and faithful customers who love your store and come in often. They want you to succeed and they will honestly tell you important information—if you ask them. Ask them what they like about the store (and do more of it) and what they don't like (and fix it). Ask that once frequent shopper why she doesn't come in so often anymore.

You may think you know the answers to these questions already, but it is a mistake to assume that you do. I challenge you to take frequent verbal surveys every day this month to get the real facts on why you see fewer customers. My favorite thing to do was to put relevant comments on a dry erase board in the back room for all employees to see, and to remind me of what really matters to my customers.

I visited my old shop a few days ago, now called the Assistance League of the Bay Area Resale Shop (most, if not all, thrift shops in the Bay Area call themselves resale shops). I like to visit about once a month to check it out. This last time I ran into an old, faithful former customer and we chatted awhile. I pointed out all the things I love about the store that had always been important to me when I owned it; such as great displays, neat and orderly racks, good quality clothing, etc. She agreed, then shook her head, "but it's not the same."

Don't miss the message: YOU are an important presence in your business. How many customers come in just because YOU are there? You are the biggest asset in your business and don't you forget it. Keep the positive attitude and the big smile on your face as you welcome customers, no matter what the profit and loss statement says.

Pat Swartley



Too Good to be Threw's 101 Daily Tips for a Better Resale Shop

"These tips debuted on our web site, www.tgtbt.com in 2004. We hope you find some inspiring thoughts and ideas here, and that your shop becomes more profitable, easier to run, and more fun because of these tips! Our **What's New page** on TBtbT should be a daily visit for you"-----**Kate Holmes**, author of **Too Good to be Threw The Complete Operations Manual for Resale & consignment Shops and Products for the Professional Resaler.**

*The 101 tips are offered on the home page of Kate's website. While the tips are free, they are copyrighted. We recommend that you go to www.tgtbt.com to print out **all** the tips. (10 pages). Below is a sampling of some of the tips copied directly from the website.*

Setting a limit ("3 items per dressing room") is the lazy shopkeeper's way of maintaining control. It is inconvenient for honest customers, is a negative statement, and most of all unenforceable. (Ed. Note: it also annoys the heck out of most customers)

Window display tip: Don't use too many items. Think in odd numbers. Three items are better than two or four. Don't stuff your windows. The focal point of the display should be in the center, about 1/3 of the way down. It is easiest to choose this piece first, then blend in the rest of the window.

The most important thing to remember about problems that occur? They are not problems. They are opportunities in disguise.

Always try to sell a first-time visitor something even if it's only something small and inexpensive. It makes her remember her visit and gets her in the habit of buying from you. (Ed. Note: Can't sell her anything? Offer a coupon for her next visit.)

When you're asked, "are you accepting stuff now?", **your answer must always be "yes!"** With good systems, good pricing and a good selling effort, there is never a reason to call a temporary halt [to accepting merchandise].

Don't get complacent about [consignment] suppliers. Some of your most valued ones may move, may stop buying all those goods, or may gain an in-law to give the items to! Always cultivate more [consignors]. The best way? Make sure your present ones are so happy that they will rave all about you!

Customer testimonials make terrific ads. They give a personal touch to your advertising and imply community acceptance of shopping secondhand.

Shoplifter alert! Use lots of mirrors! It will make a potential shoplifter uncomfortable, since she will be unable to tell if someone is watching her, and will provide the honest shopper with lots of spots to look at merchandise. Eliminate blind spots and dark corners. Move around your sales floor during crowded hours. Know what's going on at all times. Don't turn your back to the sales floor while on the phone.

Don't under-price best sellers! If you price too low, the first person who sees it will grab it. Maintain a "new arrivals" section for frequent shoppers.

Use a consistent layout in advertising. Customers will learn to recognize your ad and look for it. Even if they don't read it they will be reminded of you.



How to Run a Successful Small Business

These suggestions were found in the Sunday, June 26, 2006 Business Section of the Houston Chronicle in a column written by Ron Consolino. Mr. Consolino is a management counselor for SCORE, counselors to America's small business owners. (www.scorehouston.org).

1. **HIRE GOOD PEOPLE.** Hire capable, trustworthy, hard working, personable people in the first place. Pay them a decent wage and train them well or you will find yourself doing their job or spending valuable time and money replacing and retraining a new employee.
2. **CONSTANTLY IMPROVE.** If it works today it may not work tomorrow because there are constant changes going on in the consumer and customer service world. Customers like to see innovation and creativity in your business. It gives them confidence that you are in control and you care about business. The market rewards those who are the first to produce a new and valuable product or service.
3. **PUT THE CUSTOMER FIRST.** Remember, the customer pays the rent and your salary! Satisfied customers are your best and most effective marketing tool. Not only will they keep coming back, but they will encourage their friends and family as well. And don't forget, they are your best source of information for improving your business, so ask them what you can do better.
4. **TAKE CARE OF YOUR INTERNAL CUSTOMERS.** Internal customers are your employees, suppliers and service providers who are indispensable to operating a profitable business. Treat them well and they will help you through difficult situations.
5. **ALWAYS KEEP COMMITMENTS.** Never let anybody down even if you must eat additional expense. Your word must be golden to inspire confidence in your business and is essential to building a good, long-term reputation.
6. **WORK HARD.** Most small businesses require a tremendous effort by the Owners, especially in the early years. You must attend to all the little details. Running a business is not for the faint of heart.
7. **(Editor's Note) KEEP CONSIGNORS HAPPY.** They are your bread and butter, after all. Establish a reliable system of payment that satisfies them, and keep your take-in procedures focused on how best to serve them.
8. **(Editor's Note) ENJOY YOUR BUSINESS!** And let EVERYbody know it. Remember that your Attitude will affect not only your employees, but the customers and suppliers you do business with as well.



WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

Once Upon a Child

15951 FM 529, Suite #140
Houston, TX 77095
Phone: 281-858-6830
Email: ouachouston@sbcglobal.net

Owner, Kimberly Hellums, sells everything for children including furniture and toys, but no maternity. She buys-outright all merchandise in this franchised store. One advantage here is that she can buy all seasons items. No appointments necessary. She takes clothing sizes 0-16 and only sells new car seats.

Trudy's Boutique Resale

1927 Fairview
Houston, TX 77019
Phone: 713-524-7888
Email: trumar@aol.com

Owner, Marion Collier, sells women's clothing and accessories. The store is closed on Monday and is open 11 am to 6 pm Tues through Sat.

Better Safe Than Sorry

The BBB has responded to the growing problem of data theft at small businesses. "Businesses of all sizes need to be vigilant in protecting their customers, employees, and themselves." The national program developed by the BBB is called, Security & Privacy Made Simpler™ that offers small businesses a non-technical roadmap for securing their data.

The program is free, and includes easy-to-read security and privacy toolkits that are accessible online at www.bbb.org/securityandprivacy. This program protects your customers. An employee protection plan comes out this fall. The program also provides checklists for everyday security practices. Simple, practical steps can make a major difference in your businesses' security. The odds are increasing that your company's sensitive data could be resold to "smart bad guys" who know how to wreak havoc with your customer database.

Welcome New STARlet

Marry Go Round
719-A West Gray
Houston, TX 77019
Phone: 713-874-0688 email: marry-goround@gmail.com

You have to love that name! No doubt what is sold there. This bridal boutique opened in January 2006, and is owned by Judy Salvato.

News Around the Galaxy



Third Anniversary Sale

Carrie Mathews at All Dressed Up Kid's Resale, in Pearland recently signed a new lease and held her anniversary sale on July 15th featuring a progressive sale beginning at 9 am, and an appearance of Sponge Bob (her husband in a rented costume). A karaoke machine highlighted the fun and refreshments featured gummy worms! Carrie advertised in her famous monthly newsletter, put flyers in shopping bags, and also dropped them off at local Day Cares. She estimates her total expense was \$200.

Got Gold?

Debbie Damon at B'Dazzled, in River Oaks, called to tell us that she has found a reliable, honest business contact for those who want to sell gold jewelry. Call her at 713-387-2525.

Shop for Sale

Changes, ladies in Webster, Clear lake area. Cheryl Corbett, owner, wants to spend more time with her grandkids. She is retaining her Changes Kids store. Good call, Cheryl, the grandmother of 3 precious grandkids! She said she got lots of responses to her print advertising offering the shop for sale. (Ed. Note: the name of the store was not mentioned).

Lady's & Man's Resale at Kirkwood and Memorial. Kim Zigler, owner, wishes to retire and is asking for a modest cash buy-out. New owner must qualify for lease and assume some consignor debt. A long time *STARS* member, **Lady's & Man's Resale** has enjoyed a fine reputation as one of the premiere resale shops in Houston. Please direct inquiries to Kim at 281-531-0008.

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



***S.T.A.R.S. Newsletter
C/O Yolanda Ramirez
1922 Fountain View
Houston, TX 77057***

**First Class Mail
Address Correction Requested**



A PUBLICATION OF THE SOUTH TEXAS ASSOCIATION OF RESALE SHOPS