



# STARS News-

Aug/Sept 2008

Volume

## Mark Your Calendars



### October 1, 2008

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.

### Sunday, October 19

STARS Annual Meeting at Children's Collections

### December 31, 2008

STARS annual membership fee of \$50 due. This fee covers all costs for the website, including hosting and maintenance and for our newsletter expense. A renewal form will be mailed in the fall.

## STARS Annual October Meeting News

DATE: Sunday, October 19, 2008

Time: 2:00-4:00 pm

Place: Children's Collections

Phone: 713-664-5219

Address: 5219 Bellaire Blvd.

Bellaire, TX 77401

Hostess: Yolanda Ramirez

Come check out Yolanda's new store, opened July 28th, visit with your peers, and share ideas and concerns. Don't forget to bring some "show and tell" networking ideas! Bring an employee, spouse, another resale shop owner friend, or even your mother. **This meeting is open to members and non-members.**

**Please RSVP to Yolanda** so she can have enough chairs for everyone. Consider bringing your own folding chair. Light refreshments.

### Hot off the Press!

The 2008 Official STARS Directory has been distributed to advertisers. It has a brand new color and look. If you would like a copy please pick one up at Yolanda's new store or send her a business-size self-addressed and stamped envelope. (see her address above)

STARS wishes to thank Jacke Shipwash, the publisher, for all her hard work and for all those who contributed ideas and suggestions toward the final product. To save you money, STARS will now publish the directory annually in June.

Our directory is distributed through 5 drop-offs around Houston and through requests to our website, which gets nearly 1,000 "hits" per month.

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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](http://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](mailto:childrenscollections@live.com)

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

**Official STARS address is:**  
**STARS**

5219 Bellaire Blvd.  
Bellaire, TX 77040

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Email: [pswartley@yahoo.com](mailto:pswartley@yahoo.com)

**Layout/graphics**  
Karen Frerking

## LETTER FROM THE EDITOR...

It is a common assumption that in a tough economy people will gravitate toward resale and thrift shops. We see the media all over this today. Take advantage of it every way you can. It is a given that people will be more careful where and how they spend money. How can you steer them toward your shop?

In the July issue of the NARTS Network Newsletter, Adele R. Meyer, the Executive Director made some suggestions on how to take advantage of the media hype now directed toward us. **“Reporters are very receptive to a story about a local business that is thriving and providing consumers with a way to ‘shop and save’”.** A key to getting good press is to develop a “press kit.” Adele says to take photos inside your store and get quotes from satisfied customers to use in press releases. She is quick to caution us to not make “quotes of doom and gloom” or give negative information about business. **Check out the National Association of Resale and Thrift Shops website for lots of valuable information. [www.narts.org](http://www.narts.org).**

In the same issue our beloved resale guru, **Kate Holmes**, shares this information: if the press comes knocking on your door have some “sound bite” answers ready for the questions they are likely to ask. It is also a great idea to develop the sound bites to use in just general conversation with potential customers you may meet in public.

Kate gives several examples of good sound bites. Question: why would I want to shop in your store? Sound bite answer: “There is something for everyone and it changes daily” or “The shoppers who get the best things are those who stop in often to see what is new”. **Visit Kate’s website, [www.tgtbt.com](http://www.tgtbt.com): to read about “Talking to the Media: Giving Quotable Quotes for Any Occasion or “Grabbing their Attention: How to Make the Media Love you.”**

**FYI:** Had an interesting chat with a CPA the other day and learned that legally you are responsible for paying your consignors, no matter what your contract may say about them forfeiting their money after a certain period of time. Also, if you are unable to locate or pay consignors within a five-year period you should record this information on your tax returns (if you are not a corporation) and **GIVE THE MONEY TO THE STATE.** If the IRS audits your store, and it is discovered that you have not been doing this, they may require you to pay them for all the unclaimed back money for as long as you have been in business. To date STARS hasn’t heard of this happening to any of our members.

**Did you know:** It is a general banking policy to not honor “stale” checks older than 6 months. Credit unions have different rules. You may also print on the check such information as “void after 60 days” that will be honored by the bank, but be aware that if a check is not cashed, legally you still owe the money and should issue another check if a stale check is presented to you. (some stores charge a fee for this service.) Check further with your attorney or CPA if you have any questions.

**Pat Swartley**



### **Tips on more Effective Print Advertising.**

from Jacke Shipwash, STARS Official Directory publisher

1. About ad size: If the ad is small do not cram the ad space with information. Be very selective on ad copy leaving out any non-essential facts. If the information you really want in the ad makes the ad look crowded—get a bigger ad.
2. Artwork should be on the left side of the ad to attract a reader's attention to read the whole ad as people tend to read from left to right and where you put the artwork is where they are most likely to start scanning your ad as they read to the right.
3. How you display the ad copy is very important. So many times I see advertisers put their business name in big, bold print while the shop special is in small print. Your store name should not be the focal point of the ad.
4. Printing a business card as an ad is ineffective. You need to catch the attention of the reader to draw them to your store. Change your ad specials monthly. Give them a sense of urgency to come to your store!
5. Have fun with your advertising and be creative. What can you do to draw attention to your ad? The best ad I ever saw had big artwork of a bald man with the message over his head that read, "need a rug?" Below the head was ad copy from a rug company. I laughed so hard! The ad did what it was supposed to do. It captured my attention.
6. By the way, pictures of people, or their faces are the number one attention getter. That is why I always have people on the cover of my Resale Shopping Guide in the Bay Area publication. If you would like a copy, send a self-addressed, stamped business-size envelope to me at P. O. Box 431, Santa Fe, TX 77510

### **ELIMINATING BARRIERS TO CUSTOMER SERVICE**

*What will annoy customers the most and cause them to stop doing business with you?*

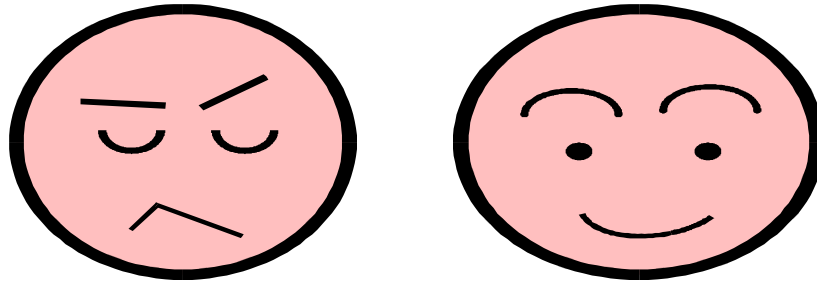
1. You promise more than you can deliver. Be careful to only promise service that you can deliver. Not delivering on any promise will lead to mistrust toward your company. One example is not paying consignors when promised.
2. Your policies are too rigid. Policies that are too rigid and don't allow for some variation depending on the circumstances will always get you an unhappy customer. Issues with lay-away policies provoke the most problems. Another example is refusing to return consignment items only a few days past the pickup period when they are still on the racks.
3. Customer service representatives or sales clerks do not have the authority to solve most of the customers' problems. Any time an employee has to stop everything to call you about a customer matter your business suffers a loss of credibility.
4. Any dispute on the price of an item. Make sure all prices are clear about items on sale or for any other type of sales promotions. Be careful also that some customers may switch tags.
5. Time is very important to your customers trying to juggle family, work and recreation time. If doing business with you costs them precious time they will look elsewhere. Give them fast and efficient service at consignment check in and the sales counter. Making it hard to find what they are looking for is another customer killer.



### Have You Ever Dealt With an Unhappy Customer?

by Pat

Swartley



I am sure this question brought more than a few smiles to everyone's face and some fond memories of a scene played out in your store. Before we get into a discussion of how to deal with such customers let's address one issue that is usually over-looked, and that is, there are two kinds of angry, unhappy customers.

One is the legitimate unhappy customer who has a reasonable complaint, and there is the other unhappy customer who chooses to take a small issue, blow it up into a mountain and then stage a drama queen performance. You only have a few seconds to make a judgment call on which customer is standing there. The rule of thumb is to let the legitimate complainer vent while you give her undivided attention while offering gentle words of sympathy. The drama queen must be cut off at the pass before her hysteria drives other customers from the store.

Another important factor to remember when dealing with the angry or unhappy customer is to not take it personally. The customer may be upset with your store policy or a situation, not you. Think of a Qtip—"Quit Taking It Personally! Do not allow a customer to make you angry. Don't make that choice to become angry even with the obvious Drama Queen. "He who angers you, conquers you."

Nothing you say or do will placate the Drama Queen so do not even try. Get them out of the store as soon as possible. I've even calmly asked them to leave my store or I will call the police, and I have gone to the phone and started dialing. Once I just walked out of the room and went into the back and shut the door. The DQ shut up and began talking calmly to my employee! My employee listened while the DQ even admitted she had gotten out of control over a simple issue.

With the legit unhappy customer you should deal with the person and their feelings first, and then the problem. Immediately adopt an attitude that you sincerely care about resolving the problem and keeping them as a valued customer. One way to do this is to make sincere statements such as, "Oh, I am so sorry about your inconvenience," or "Thank you for bringing this to our attention," or "I can understand how upset this situation has made you."

Once the customer is aware that you care and want to make her a satisfied customer you can work together to reach a solution. Train everyone in your organization on how to handle a dissatisfied customer without calling you except in extreme situations.



## Resale Shopping News Around the Galaxy.....



I had the pleasure of visiting STARS member **Upscale Resale** in La Porte, TX recently. This is one of my favorite shops because it is neat, well organized, easy to shop in, friendly, and best of all I always come away with a good find at a price I am happy to pay. In other words, this shop fills all my basic needs when I shop resale!

**Owners, Patty Ward and Nancy Willingham** have owned the ladies dress shop for 14 years. They have had up and down times like the rest of us and even looked into selling out, but Nancy says, "We love it and can't let go."

Nancy shared with me that she pays all bills on line including payments to most consignors. This saves her time, check expense, and postage. Consider looking into this banking service with your bank. Upscale Resale has a 90-day consignment period. Consignors may use their store credit or receive payment if they choose by calling or coming into the store during the first 15 days of the month.

Upscale Resale is located at 712 West Fairmont, Suite D, La Porte, Texas 77571. They are on the "main drag" right off 146 and across the street from the La Porte Post Office. Phone: 281-471-1290, email: [upscale.resale@sbcglobal.net](mailto:upscale.resale@sbcglobal.net). Their store hours are Tues-Fri: 10am-5:00pm and Saturday: 10am-3pm.

**Belles & Beaus Boutique** is the former **Sunday's Child**. New owner, **Valerie Bergeron**, took over several months ago and made a dramatic transformation to the interior of the store and reports that sales also increased dramatically with the change over and improvements. She uses ConsignPro software to keep track of everything.

What is special about her store? You can buy 99-cent sleepers as well as a brand new Little Mass boutique jeans and top set for \$100 (sells \$140 retail). Belles & Beaus wants to attract the budget shopper as well as the boutique shopper. Valerie will feature new boutique consignment items such as hand made custom hair bows, "pillow case" dresses and new shoes, also gift items for mom. A free gift-wrapping service is available.

A 90 day consignment is offered to consignors with the option to pick up cash due anytime or use store credit. Valerie prints checks due consignors on the 20<sup>th</sup> of each month for amounts over \$30. She calls consignors to pick them up. If the check is not picked up in three months the check is voided and re-deposited back into the consignment account.

Belles & Beaus is located in League City, Texas. Address: 410B West Main Street, League City TX 77573. Phone: 281-338-5439. Visit them at [www.bellesbeausboutique.com](http://www.bellesbeausboutique.com)

**Crayons Childrens Resale, Inc**, is under **new owners; mother Gail Roben and daughter Emily** since January 2008 when Tressa retired. Emily was a former consignor at Crayons. They also own a child-care business. They "completely gutted" the store in February and opened later with a new retail look. They love the business and are doing great. Visit their website [www.crayonschildrensresale.net](http://www.crayonschildrensresale.net).

Crayons has a 120-day consignment period (four months) and prints checks for \$30 or more each month for the consignor to pick up or will mail if provided with a self-addressed stamped envelope.

**Belles & Beaus and Crayons Childrens Resale, Inc. have ads in the newly designed STARS official Directory recently printed and distributed.**

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



*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**  
**Since 1991**