



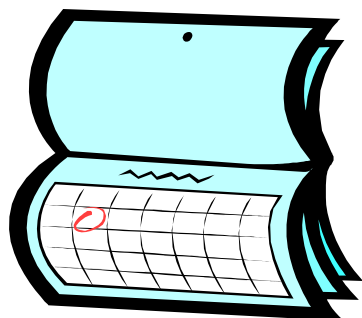
# STARS Newsletter

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

Aug/Sept 2009

Volume 19, Number 4

## Mark Your Calendars



### October 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](mailto:pswartley@yahoo.com) or by phone 281-338-9360.

### Annual October meeting (TBA)

### December 31, 2009

Renewal of membership dues deadline. Dues are \$50 (and have been for 18 years!). Support your association and maintain your listing on the website and continue to receive the newsletter.

## DID YOU KNOW.....?

### “Isn’t the internet amazing?”

Yolanda said she received a call from a lady in Calgary, Canada who needed nursery equipment for when she moved to SE Houston. She had found Yolanda on the *STARS* website from googling resale shops in Houston, Texas. Yolanda, in true *STARS* tradition referred her to the *STARS* childrens’ shops in SE Houston.

**Do not underestimate the power of the internet to promote your business.** Check out page 5 for other tips. Selling online is becoming huge. Best idea is to hire an employee at an hourly rate to enter the data on the selling site of your choice.

Another idea is to post pictures of your latest greatest consignment items on your website for your regular customers to look for, then rush into your store to buy.

**Don’t have a website?** Check out the websites of *STARS* members and find out who created the ones you like best. Go to [www.starsresale.com](http://www.starsresale.com) to do your research..

Don’t have your website linked to your listing? Contact Yolanda at [childrenscollections.com](http://childrenscollections.com) **It’s Free!**

## Inside This Issue

|  |      |
|--|------|
| Letter to the Editor.....                    |      |
| .....Learn from the Master.....              | pg 2 |
| Store Appearance...How important is it?..... | pg 3 |
| Dear Resale Queen.....                       | pg 4 |
| Websites of interest.....                    | pg 5 |
| How to make more money.....                  | pg 5 |

### **TAX FREE WEEKEND**

**FRIDAY, AUG. 21 -SUNDAY, AUG. 23.**

See enclosed list of tax free items **for elementary and secondary school students only.**



## 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 members.

**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.

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:**

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**Layout/graphics**  
Karen Frerking

## Letter from the editor...

### **LEARN FROM THE MASTER**

Mattress Mack, A.K.A Jim McIngvale, iconic entrepreneur, and community leader, experienced the loss of his Gallery Furniture warehouse in May. There was an outpouring of sympathy from the community. MM turned it into a great publicity event with full-page ads in the Chronicle quoting the heart-felt letters of condolences. People rushed into his stores to buy furniture and home décor items to help boost sales to pay for the loss. Talk about turning a lemon into lemonade.

In an article about the fire in the June 5<sup>th</sup> Houston Chronicle is the statement, “He (Jim) is not in the habit of losing. He is going to come back bigger and better...his philosophy has always been ‘**You keep moving forward, keep improving.**’” Gallery Furniture gave \$10,000 gift certificates to each of the 31 fire departments that responded to the fire. He is the marketing master. Look for more wonderful free PR as the press follows the story of rebuilding the warehouse over the next year. (Ed. note: Another article about Gallery and Mac appeared in the Houston Chronicle, June 28<sup>th</sup> B section)

Gallery Furniture has over the year’s generated “incredible sales” per square foot outperforming the industry average. They can boast of being the most successful independent furniture store in America. **There is a lot to learn from Mattress Mac and here are some of the lessons:**

**Be a presence in your community.** Are you recognized at community functions and business meetings? Is your name out there donating your time and merchandise to benefit local organizations? Much of his success is due to name recognition of him and his business. Look for opportunities to make speeches ( McIngvale is all over town doing that) about resale and your business. Gallery is famous for their huge financial support to area hospitals, the rodeo and more.

**Advertise effectively and with distinction.** He is famous for his TV commercials that made him a rich man by saying “Gallery Furniture will save you money” as he jerks bills from his pocket. Look for the best advertising venue and unique tag line for your business, and keep doing it. Mac says, “Late to bed, early to rise, work like hell and advertise.”

**Fill your store with merchandise people want to buy.** Be open to new ideas and different merchandise to draw more sales. I’ve seen children’s resale shops adding ladies jewelry and home décor items. Talk to your customers about what they want.

**Deliver outstanding customer service, exceeding expectations and do it better than your competitors.** Gallery Furniture delivers the day you buy the furniture. A visit to his showroom is a shopping pleasure: free basketball for the kids, free food, playground for the kids, and a “birthday party” at 4pm everyday. Mac himself has his “office” on a table near the front of the store so he can greet, thank, and interact with his customers. (Shades of Sam Walton, of Wal\*Mart.) **Do not underrate your presence in your store.**

**How can YOU create excitement in YOUR store?**

**To sum up: The MacInvals have persevered in business because of their can-do attitude, an uncompromising work ethic, stellar customer service, and a deep belief in advertising.**

Your Editor, *Pat Swartley*



## LET'S TALK ABOUT WHAT STORE APPEARANCE SAYS TO CUSTOMERS.

(Tips and Resources for Growing Your Business, by Britt Beemer, nationally recognized marketing strategist).

**Did you know that marketing research says that the exterior of your store generates 45% of your marketing image?** (includes the buildings appearance, signage, parking lot, and landscaping). The potential customer will form impressions about the quality and selection of merchandise based on what they see outside the store. (Ed. note: A customer once said to me, "I've passed by your store for years and I had no idea you had such wonderful stuff in here.") Yep, the outside looked clean but very average with the green paint. There was nothing out front to specifically attract attention to what we were selling. **Is your marketing image turning customers away?**

**Is there something happening in your store that's not happening anywhere else?** Consumers want a unique shopping experience. Set your store apart from the competition by providing a "wow factor." Nobody does this better than Mattress Mack. What excitement can you create? Notice he gives out a lot of free stuff, has babysitting for the shoppers and offers unique customer service (you can sleep in that bed you bought "tonight.") What can you do to make customers want to shop your resale shop first?

**When customers look around your store, do they get the impression that someone takes pride in the store?** A clean, well-organized store says the owner knows how to take care of business and they care about the customer being able to make buying decisions quickly and easily. **Many customers will not stay long or even come back if this important rule is not followed.**

**Is your store known for a particular category of merchandise?** And do you have a lot of merchandise in this category that would make the consumer want to shop you first if they want that product? One resale shop in *STARS* is known for their jewelry selection. This is their "Wow" factor that draws customers, and they have lots of choices. One furniture store has a big selection of home décor items.

**Is your store worth returning to?** A consumer will make that decision based on their entire shopping experience. Were they appreciated? Were they able to shop easily? Did they have a unique shopping experience? It is not all about the prices. (Ed. Note: As a consumer, I find I will buy something I really want even if the price is more than I would like to pay if I have had a good experience in the store and I like the store or employees. On the other hand, I have walked away from something I wanted if I thought the price was too high, when I didn't like my shopping experience there.)

**Final quote from Mr. Britt: "In my 25 years of market research, I have learned that you don't market to sell merchandise—you market to sell the store.** (Ed. note: Take some time to wrap your mind around this statement. Merchandise comes and goes. You want customers to remember your store and to come back to it.)



Dear Resale Queen,

**My biggest problem is dealing with rejects after processing consignments. It is such a pain in the neck calling consignors to come back to pick them up. Some get mad that you made the mistake of not returning them while they were there and they have to make another trip back. A few are glad you called. Sometimes they say they will pick up but then we are holding the stuff for weeks taking up valuable space before donating anyway. Please help!**

**Signed: Sick of reject problems**

Dear Sick,

I struggled with this problem all the years I was in business. I never had the guts to do the obvious: Don't call--donate the rejects. Period. Make sure your contract spells out your policy: "if the pricing department finds a defect in your item it will be donated." Get them to initial it. The core problem is examining how you process incoming consignments. **Allow for more time to more thoroughly examine each item so that you have fewer rejects to start with.**

If the flaw was easy to fix, I did it if I really thought the item was very sellable, and to make a point—why accept anything that isn't very sellable?

**Know your consignor.** Many times you already know a consignor would want you to donate anything that turned out to have a flaw. With others I asked if they would like to be called in case of rejects in the "final" inspection. Most said no, and I noted that on their consignment account.

What saved me a number of times from the wrath of angry consignors who discovered some of their items were donated, was putting the information on their account. If a consignor saw that there were 12 items listed on her account and she had a receipt for 15 items dropped off, I could look at her account and tell her that 3 items were donated and what they were, and why, and also that she gave us permission to donate rejects.

Good luck. Even if you follow all your procedures, donating rejects can turn on you and cause a consignor to not trust your store. I've had angry consignors declare there was "nothing wrong" with their clothes and think I stole them.

Dear Resale Queen,

**One thing that drives me up the wall is for a consignor to tell me how much she paid for an item and how much she must get if she leaves it for consignment. How should I handle this situation?**

**Signed: Annoyed in Angleton**

Dear Annoyed,

Take a deep breath and give them the facts: you can price it at X dollars and if it sells at full price their percentage is X dollars, and then move out of the way as they grab the item and walk out. You cannot please this type of consignor. You want to cultivate the consignor that trusts you to get the best price you can on their unwanted items: the kind that gushes over their check and thinks you run the best resale shop in the world. And of course you do.

*The Resale Queen*



## News Around the Galaxy.....



**Check this out!** Here is a number worth putting in your cell phone or home phone speed dial. 1-800-Goog-411. This is an awesome service from Google and it is free. You are on the road and you call this number. The voice at the other end says, "City & State", I say where I want to go. They say, "business, name, or type of service." I give the name of the business I want to talk to. They say, "connecting" and the business answers the phone! How great is that? This is nationwide and it is absolutely free. Why call your phone service information provider and pay to get the phone number you want, and pay for them to connect you.?  
submitted by Yolanda.

### Check out these websites:

**Stamps.com** is another great website. Bring the post office right into your store. Did you know: **Personal makes a difference.** Email has its benefits but the number one way to connect with your customer is with a personalized, handwritten thank you note on real paper. Get some nice note cards from **Noteworthy Notes** or **PrintingForLess.**

Make it a habit at the end of the day or every few days to thank the special consignor to whom you are mailing a fat check, or the retail customer who made a recent large purchase, or how about the first time customer you met today? Don't forget a thank you note to your staff or vendors you adore for their wonderful products or services.

**icontact.com** offers email marketing at its best. They offer many features to help you easily create, send and track readers of your email newsletters, surveys, and autoresponders. Receive daily email marketing tips, professionally designed email newsletter templates and much more. Check them out. Recommended by Debbie Damon at B'Dazzled.

**Move More Merchandise:** The ultimate way to make more money! Here is an idea to increase sales. One store ran a one-day well advertised sale promoting the following discounts: For sales of 3-6 items the customer receives a 10% discount. For sales of 7-9 items they receive a 15% discount. Sales over 10 items, 20% off. This idea would probably work better in a children's store. Work with this idea to make it work best for you. Make the day a fun day with door prizes, refreshments and other incentives to buy, buy, buy.

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



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**Since 1991**