



STARS Newsletter

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

October/November 2006

Volume 16, Number 5

Mark Your Calendars



September, 2006

Fall Official *STARS* Directory was delivered to advertisers. If you paid for an ad and did not receive directories, please call Yolanda at 713-789-6456. If you did not advertise but would like some directories, please call Yolanda. Extra copies will also be available at the *STARS* Annual meeting.

Sunday, October 22

STARS Annual meeting at Designer Consignor, (see detail on the right)

December 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

December 31, 2006

Annual membership dues of \$50 must be paid to keep website listing

March 2007

Spring delivery of the *STARS* Official Directory

June 29-July 2, 2007

NARTS Annual Conference in San Antonio.
www.narts.org.

STARS Meet on Sunday October 22, 2006 from 1-3:30 pm

Tina Campbell at **Designer Consignor**, is “thrilled”, “honored” and “excited!!” to be the hostess for our Annual Meeting to be held at her store. Her doors will be open at 1 PM to meet and greet everyone. During the first half hour we want everyone to sign in, get a name tag and get out there looking over her unique shop. (Everyone has a unique shop, right?) Tina will give you a 10% discount on any purchase of her fine ladies and junior clothing and accessories.

Our networking meeting will begin after the “meet and greet” and light refreshments will be available.

This is an open meeting and we welcome *STAR*lets, prospective members, employees, and family members (no kids, please). Come in casual dress, and if possible, bring your own chair, and a notebook to take notes! Got a cute handout you want to share of a store brochure, a successful ad, etc?

By the way, Tina wants to thank Debbie at **B’Dazzled** for giving a new customer a *STARS* directory and a referral.

Your Editor, *Pat Swartley*

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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, *STAR*lets 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. *STAR*let provisional membership is offered to new resale shops in business less than 1 year. *STAR*lets 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...

Good news! The 2006 Conference for NARTS will be held in San Antonio—right down the street, practically. For all these years I have been touting the virtues of attending a Conference and now some of you should seriously consider going. I urge you to attend and to start putting a few bucks away each month to pay for it. Hotel and Conference fees run about \$1,000, which includes most meals, special events, 20 outstanding workshops, a Sourcemart on Sunday afternoon, and much more. Looking for a resale software program for your store? Several of the leading software vendors will be there to give you hands on experience and to answer your questions. Need some new clothing and jewelry items for your store? Add transportation and spending money. Make it a family vacation to boot!

I will attend and have volunteered to be a “presenter.” I would love to host a table of *STARS*. For more information about the Conference go to the www.narts.org

More good news. NARTS has honored me with **Life Membership** for my contribution to them as well as the resale industry. Only 4 other women have received this honor in the 22-year history of the organization. I am very honored to receive this award and I humbly thank the NARTS Board of Directors.

I hope that you will make time and take the effort to attend the Annual *STARS* Meeting on October 22nd. There will be plenty of opportunity to share marketing and advertising ideas with those in attendance. No boring speeches! I have to say without reservation that in my resale career I learned as much from other resale shop owners as I did from any other source! Make it a priority to avail yourself of this valuable learning opportunity and be ready to share your best ideas.

IT'S GETTING TO BE THAT TIME AGAIN.... DUES RENEWAL NOTICES WILL BE IN THE MAIL DURING OCTOBER, OR EARLY NOVEMBER. Dues will remain at \$50 a year as they have for 16 years. What a bargain! For this you get the newsletter mailed to you, and free hosting of your listing and website on the *STARS* website. (note: free hosting of your website is provided to those who paid the initial fee of \$50 to link up). **Please pay up before DECEMBER 31ST!** Don't make Yolanda call you---she is as busy as you are. When you send in dues, please take the time to look at your listing on the *STARS* website. This is the time to make any changes or additions. Want to add an email address? All changes are free of charge!

Have a fabulous fall, and tell me about it. Email me at p_swartley@yahoo.com, or call my home phone: 281-338-9360.

Pat Swartley



WHERE HAVE ALL THE GOOD CUSTOMERS GONE? By Pat Swartley

As I travel about or talk to *STARS* and prospective *STARS* I hear the same re-occurring theme: “I have fewer customers walking in the door than ever before.” That was also a hot topic of interest at the recent NARTS Annual Conference. Why is that? Where did they go? Why have all the days gone by when resale was the place to get the best bargains and the place to shop for that personalized service only we could deliver?

First of all, we have major competition now in the area of bargain shopping and customer service. That is a fact we cannot change. My best friend is the Queen of Resale Shopping and she still loves to spend the day hitting all of her favorite shops but when it comes to buying she still considers ALL of her options. I had lunch with her yesterday and had to listen to her brag about all the bargains she bought at Wal-Mart at their blow-out sales on summer clothing, Wal-Mart has upgraded their clothing lines and we can no longer sneer at them. **ADVICE: Clear out your seasonal merchandise before the retailers do, and be even more selective in accepting casual wear.**

This is a lady with high-end clothing in her closet from some of the *STARS* best ladies shops, but most often she shops discounters for casual wear because she get better selection and the price is right. She keeps her eyes open for the unbelievable sales at better department stores, also, and loves to brag about her finds.

Price and value determine her purchasing choices no matter what store she shops in. Resale shops no longer dominate her choice of shopping venues, I'm sad to say—for you. **ADVICE: Cater to shop-a-holics who could be your best customers—strive to get the best quality merchandise only and price it to Sell!** Yeah, it's hard to turn down consignors, but do it. Items a little bit too old or a little bit too worn shouldn't be on your floor at ANY price. They will cost you time and money you couldn't recoup even if you did sell them at the end of season blow out sale.

My youngest daughter is the Princess of Resale Shopping. She could shop resale and thrift until she dropped as a young woman. Today as a young mother with a small child and one on the way, time is an issue with her, and she loves to wheel and deal for bargains at the computer. She gets incredible things for her house and her child. And she doesn't care about clothes for herself anymore. How many of your customers have left for these reasons? **ADVICE: Figure out how the Internet can benefit YOU! See page 4 for ideas.**

In the 6 months before I donated my store I did the least advertising and marketing ever in my business, and I saw the lowest sales in 10 years! Frankly, I saw no need to make a big effort to build up my customer base for the new owners who were going to convert my shop into a thrift store. But the point I am making is that when I backed off on marketing and advertising my sales suffered. Another reason my sales dropped and fewer customers came in was because I began to have less inventory as I neared closing. **ADVICE: Keep your marketing and advertising a priority no matter what and pay attention to your best suppliers of inventory.**

Turn to page 4 for the most popular marketing and advertising ideas for resale shops. Best of all some of them are free or cost very little to implement.



HOW WE CAN GET SOME OF OUR CUSTOMERS BACK?

By Pat Swartley

If you read page 3 you know why we see fewer customers, now let's review some of the most popular and effective marketing and advertising ideas for resale shops.

1. Folks, the Internet is here to stay and you need to access how it can best help your business in reaching and keeping customers. It is becoming more essential every day to get your own website and to advertise it constantly in all marketing endeavors. Don't know where to start? **Here is my top idea:** visit other *STARS* websites for ideas and ask for references. Go to the home page of the *STARS* website to see a list of *STARS* with websites linked to our website.

What? You have a website and it isn't linked to the *STARS* website? Shame on you! Link your website for a ONE TIME fee of \$50 and get your store name on the home page of www.starsresale.com. Increase your website exposure for such a small investment! Send a check to Yolanda with your web address and mail it to: *STARS*, 1438 Fountain View, Houston TX 77057. It is that easy to link up.

2. One of the most effective and cheapest ways to reach your customer/consignor base is through email. There's that Internet again. Break your email accounts into specialized targets such as most valued customer, regular customer, consignor customer. Sometimes you will want to send information to only certain customers and sometimes to everyone. Be sure to keep messages brief and no more than a few each month, and give them a reason to drop everything and run to your store. **On-line coupons are popular.**

How do you get email addresses? Simple. Ask your customer for them. "Janie, may we add your name to our VIP email list to keep you informed of sales and hot new merchandise just in?" Susie, may we add you to our consignor email list so we can keep you informed of our deadlines and seasonal schedules?

Hopefully you have at least one of those smart, energetic Internet savvy teenagers working for you or living with you, who will love to set all this up and maintain it. Give them a little bonus or extra pay in their envelope. Postcards use to be the most effective way to communicate with customers, but just think of all that time and money spent on it! **Get with the 21st century, please!**

3. Print advertising is the most expensive and least effective means of advertising. But you can't drop it altogether. Best idea: get together with other resale shops and ask your most favorite, popular newspaper in your area to create a "banner ad" for your group. An advantage is better exposure, and cheaper cost. And here is the best part: the newspaper will collect the money and be responsible for the ad copy.

Another way to go if you can afford it is to get a dynamic professionally created ad and sign up for a long-term contract with the newspaper in order to get the cheapest rates and best exposure. If you buy an ad once in awhile you will never be given a good spot in the paper. Such spots are reserved for the best customers, obviously. We understand that. Long-term exposure is proven to be the most effective way to advertise. **Best idea: Get a banner ad and keep it going on a regular basis. This is the best exposure at the best price.**

4. Don't forget the telephone! Nothing beats giving those VIP retail or consignment Customers a special call to let them know about a great event, sale or even some special items that have just come in that they might be interested in. The contact says "We care about you, and we miss you." **Best idea: No form of advertising or marketing works as good as this.**



WHAT IS YOUR BUSINESS WORTH?

Want a simple way to evaluate your worth? Just go to Kate Holmes website www.tgtbt.com and click on "Conversations With Kate". She offers a fill-in-the-blank form designed to help you examine your financial state. This is valuable information to have in case you want to sell some day or get a business line of credit at the bank. It can also help you track your progress and set up a business plan.

The form is available as a PDF file and is delivered to your computer for only \$4.99 USD. "Shipping cost—Zero!" That Kate is so funny! Use your Visa or Master Card to get your form today. While you are in Kate's Website check out all the other advantages she offers the serious resale shop owner!



THANK YOU, JACKE SHIPWASH!

Some of you may not know how fortunate *STARS* is to have a professional publisher like Jackie create our Official Directory. During the 5 or 6 years she has worked for us she has only increased the cost one time, in spite of the fact her costs have gone up. All deliveries have been on time except last September when Rita shut Jacke's printer down for a few days.

She cares about giving us the best price she can and the best way that we can continue to get this most favored treatment is to help her keep her overhead as low as possible. How can we do that? By continuing to meet her deadlines and requests for payment promptly. It is as simple as that, and by the way, Jacke once again thanks you for your wonderful cooperation. We are her favorite brochure/directory customer! Pat yourself on the back!

What? You don't advertise in the Official *STARS* Directory? The more our members advertise, the more effective an advertising tool it will become! And your customers will thank you for a copy. Make referrals to other *STARS* so much easier by handing out a Directory.

Welcome New STARlet

Designer Exchange

4522 Hwy 6
Sugar Land, TX 77478
Phone: 281-242-1033 email: designer.exchange.resale@gmail.com

Just opened September 1, this resale shop sells high end women's apparel. Owners, Firas Obaidy and Patrick Lee. You may recognize the Obaidy name as the family has owned 3 Baubles & Beads franchises. Firas has grown up in the resale culture and as you might expect, his store reflects the boutique atmosphere. Designer Exchange accepts 90 day consignments and offers a 50-50 split.

News Around the Galaxy



NEW NAME CHANGE

Best Little Wearhouse has changed their name to **Encore!**

NEW ADDRESS

Young and Restless has moved next door to 2505 Ella

NEW RETIREE!

Kelsey Smith, owner of **Sassy Town**, in Humble, closed her shop the last Saturday in August. She had terrific sales right to the end and then donated all store fixtures and remaining inventory to a charity who came and removed it.

***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