



# STARS News-

February/March 2007

Volume 17, Number 1

## Goals for STARS in 2007

Yolanda would like to hold more meetings this coming year and would like your feedback on this issue. She would like to hold meetings centered on our specialties, such as separate meetings for children and women's shops, and furniture/house wares shops. She would like your ideas and opinions, and of course your help to host or promote meetings.

Such meetings are a wonderful opportunity to meet and bond with others in your specialty, or to share ideas on common problems. At one time STARS held huge dinner meetings around the central Houston area, but we found it was too difficult to really get to know and talk to one another. We then went to meetings held in stores all around the greater Houston area in order to draw in more members from the fringe areas, and to provide more opportunity to interact with each other. All of these meetings were held on Mondays.

Later, we went to an annual Sunday afternoon meeting in October. Several members have expressed their desire to have more meetings and so STARS would like to open the floor to YOU! **What would you want STARS to do? Please send your comments by email to: Yolanda@starsresale.com**

Your Editor, *Pat Swartley*

## MARK YOUR CALENDARS

### March 2007

Spring delivery of the STARS Official Directory. Please meet Jacke Shipwash's deadlines for a timely delivery of the Directory. **Remember to pay your bill when received and not when the Directories are delivered.** We have an excellent credit rating with Jacke and we appreciate the many years she has provided us with wonderful service at a price no one else can beat. Let's continue to keep her happy! **If you want to be in the Directory, this is your last call. Call Jacke now at 409-771-6493.**

**Our Official STARS Directory is distributed year-round in the Greater Houston Metro area through our member shops, and other distribution drops. It is also a great referral resource used by our members. Yearly cost is a little more than \$200.**

### April, 2007

Next mail-out of the STARS newsletter. We welcome news of interest from members. Contact editor, Pat Swartley, at 281-338-9360 or email [p\\_swartley@yahoo.com](mailto:p_swartley@yahoo.com).

### June 22-25, 2007

**NARTS Annual Conference** in San Antonio, [www.narts.org](http://www.narts.org) for more information.

### September, 2007

Fall delivery of the STARS Official Directory.

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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, 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 S T A R S website, [www.starsresale.com](http://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...

It's hard to get out of bed in this cold weather, and of course, I don't have to if I don't want to. One of the joys of retirement. Gone are the days when I leaped out of bed to begin my day preparing to work in my resale shop. Gone are the days when my heart swelled with love and happiness for my store as I unlocked the door before business hours.

Even on the worst business day I could find something to enjoy just being in the store. Wow, this is a day I can REALLY talk to customers, or clean out the back room, or catch up on processing consignments, or redo all the displays. Maybe I will call some old customers I haven't seen in awhile. I have time to order in lunch and chat it up with the employees; maybe we'll have an informal meeting about what they think we should do to increase the customer flow. Hey, let's do some spring cleaning! ...Maybe back up the hard-drive....cards, anyone? Enjoy the day, because soon you will be too busy to do these things. Be sure to keep the big smile on your face for the customers that come in as you tell them about an up-coming promotional event or sale.

A word to the wise...many of our most successful clothing resale/consignment shops begin taking spring clothing even in December because by mid-January they have found more customers interested in this merchandise than picked over winter clothing that you can't give away. And of course if you begin asking for spring items in December, it will be January before it really starts to flow in. In March begin taking summer items. If you get a jump on the seasons you will always have some appealing new merchandise for your customers—and less of the old season still hanging around. Confess now—in the past you have delayed taking a new seasons clothing because you had so much of the old season!

Without a doubt, having new merchandise of any kind will add to your sales. Furniture stores do great with new accessories. One store near me has new artificial floral arrangements made for them and they clean up. Got one in my house! If they join STARS I'll mention their name.

This coming year will be a fun year as I go to a college reunion, visit relatives in Florida, and attend the National Association of Resale and Thrift Shops annual conference in San Antonio. How I hope some of you can attend and hang out with me! I will do a workshop on a subject I know well: "How to exit gracefully." It is a class for those looking toward the "final curtain." I will relate all the choices you have going into retirement and how to make it a successful move.

Now, I am going back to bed to stay warm. And you enjoy the rest of your day!

**Pat Swartley**



### TIPS AND TIDBITS FROM HERE AND THERE

by Pat Swartley

I admit I am a compulsive resale shopper and a very curious person about how others do resale. The subject of change is very exciting to me, and one I embraced often when I owned a resale shop. It is so great to go into a resale shop and see an idea that just knocks me out. If I had to give only one piece of advice to STARS members, it is to get out of your stores and visit as many resale shops as often as you can. My business definitely benefited from visiting other shops and other shop owners.

STARS was founded with the main idea of store owners getting to know one another and sharing ideas. Many of our members have become friends and mentors to each other, and some work co-operatively with each other to share customers. What a great idea!

***When I walk into a resale shop, first impressions are very important to me (and to your customers!). If I can't say "wow!" in the first three minutes my stay will be very short.***

Although a stunning display, especially near the front door, will grab my attention first, the second thing I look for is the general appearance of the store. Nothing gets my heart to beat faster than to see a neat, orderly store with easy access to all areas. And look at those professionally printed signs that tell me exactly what I need to know! And the racks of clothing have clear size information! I will write this store down as a place to bring my consignments, because surely if they take care of the front, they also take care of the back. I can trust these people to be professional in all that they do.

Another feature to make a shopping experience totally wonderful for me is to be able to easily tell the price of each garment. Some tags are so faint I can hardly read them. Trying to save money on ink cartridges? Get a thermal printer and never buy an ink cartridge again.

Please! Do not chase me around the store telling me about the markdowns on 6 different colored tags, or point out huge signs about it. Although I am one customer who can easily do the math, how about your other customers? Sure, they can come up to the counter and ask YOU to do the math, but do you want them to? In your heart you know it is easier for the customer to simply read the price on the ticket. And they should come first. As you mark down tickets put things in order and get re-acquainted with the merchandise.

What really rings my bell is to be able to look at all items on a rack without getting a cramp in my arm from trying to separate the clothing. Nothing will get me to stop shopping quicker than that. And I don't like to see a garment marked down 50-75% right beside a full priced item. Get the duds off to themselves and stop wasting my shopping time. If I want to shop duds, then I would appreciate having them all together. Don't make the serious dud shoppers and the non-dud shoppers shift through everything in the store.

If you really want to please me, have a chair, or a way to sit down, when I am in your dressing room. I appreciate the mirror...say, do I see tags sticking out behind the mirror?...but I'd rather go out of the dressing room and look at myself in a larger mirror, or better yet, a three-way mirror.

Now I am ready to check out. Oh my, where am I to put my things on this crowded counter with other people's items already there along with a bunch of point of sale enticer merchandise? (Once I didn't get home with all the items I paid for.)

The only worker is checking in a consignment...I guess there will be a wait. There is always a friendly worker available to help me with any questions, or to check me out when I am ready at the OTHER resale shop down the street...

I love it when I am thanked for my business and given a handout about the store, or their upcoming events and sales promotions. Better yet, give me a promise of a discount such as a coupon, clothing "bucks", or some other tempting offer to come back.



### ARE YOU REALLY COMMITTED TO CUSTOMER SERVICE?

Everyone knows the drill: To keep customers coming back you must find out what they want, and give it to them. But the real secret to customer service success is to give them MORE than they expect. Make their experience in your shop so wonderful they will talk about you to everyone they know! Here are some ideas:

1. One reason customers do not come back to a business is because of slow or inattentive service. Shop owners who work by themselves often try to help everyone at the same time thus annoying everyone. Each customer deserves your undivided attention. If you have to answer the phone while waiting on a customer, please get their number and call them back, or call another worker to handle the call. Be sure and acknowledge any waiting customers.
2. You have to hand it to Wal-Mart, every customer who walks in the door is greeted immediately. Start that customer off with a warm feeling that you appreciate their business! And if you know their name, it gets even better. Another good idea is to offer them a drink such as coffee, water, or soda. Most people will turn you down, but it is the thought: how many other resale shops do that? Got a little treat or trinket for the children? What other service can you offer that no one else does?
3. And don't forget the consignment customers! How can you make their trip one to remember? Yeah, I know, tell them their stuff is the most wonderful stuff you have seen all year and they will make fabulous money. All kidding aside, your consignor wants to leave their items soon after arriving and feel totally confident that you will take care of them and pay a fair amount for them in a timely fashion. Extra service to this customer could mean a trip to their home to pick up their truly wonderful items, or not require an appointment for them to bring in merchandise. How about the consignment contract? Too many legalese words may cause distrust toward your policies or won't be read and understood.
4. Deal with an unhappy customer promptly and fairly. Empower and train your employees to handle such customers rather than referring all problems to you. Remember, problem customers just give you an opportunity to make someone very satisfied with your company and eager to tell everyone they know how wonderful your store is.

None of the ideas in this article cost a lot of money, and they can give you a big pay-off in terms of customer loyalty. Want to find out more ways to make your loyal customers even more satisfied? Talk to them. And listen! They can give you the best ideas on how they like to be served.



## News Around the Galaxy



**GOOD NEWS.** Sam McCabe Danbibber, on the first STARS Board of Directors with Toni, has re-opened her store, Wear It Again, Sam, along with 2 partners. The 2 story, 2700 sq ft store is in the Heights and sells vintage clothing for men and women, lots of handmade items such as jewelry, purses, candles and soaps, etc, and also “Mid-Century” furniture—a hot item now—from the 50s-70s. Call Sam today and welcome her back at 713-862-9327. The store is located at 373 W. 19<sup>th</sup> Street, Houston, TX 77008.

**MORE NEWS.** Carolyn Wagner of Maxim Insurance, called to tell us Travelers Insurance has increased their rates on wind-storm damage and the amount of deductible for all businesses with a zip code in their designated “coastal region.” **If you are unhappy with your increase, please call Carolyn at 281-337-2516.** There is not a lot she can do about your increase, but she will try. Since the early 90s, Travelers has given resale shop owners a comprehensive business policy covering loss of contents, on-going business expenses if your store is shut down, and much more. Other companies may offer you only liability coverage for near the same cost as a Travelers policy. Any company you get coverage from should be “A” rated and qualified to do business in the state of Texas. Out of state companies may not be held liable to pay claims.

**SAD NEWS.** Toni Coleman, the founder of STARS died September 6, 2006, by her own hands. We all appreciate the work she did for us and offer our condolences to her family.

**BAD NEWS.** Reports are coming in about astronomical increases in rent around the Houston area. FYI, rent increases are one of the biggest reasons a storeowner is forced out of business. Be aware that every word in a lease agreement is written for the benefit of the landlord. Your only hope of not being forced out of business due to a huge increase in rent is to get the landlord to agree on the terms for the renewal of the lease that the rent can only be increased by a certain percentage. Because these terms are never in the landlords favor, it is unlikely you will succeed on that point, but give it a shot.

**Best Advice:** if you move your store, hire a professional commercial leasing agent to find you the best location and to negotiate the best terms possible for you. It will not cost you anything and it could save a lot of money and aggravation in the long run.

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***S.T.A.R.S. Newsletter  
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**First Class Mail  
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**A PUBLICATION OF THE SOUTH TEXAS ASSOCIATION OF RESALE SHOPS**