

Twice-Yearly Consignment Store Is Winding Down

BY LAURA RUBY
Times-Democrat Staff Writer

Many families are looking for ways to stretch their budgets. Kids Haven Consignment Store is the "economic elastic that allows them to stretch their money to get what their kids need," said business owner and event organizer Angela Sain.

Sain launched Kids Haven in 2001 when her oldest child was a toddler. "I realized how expensive it was to clothe my daughter and buy everything that she needed — and then she'd outgrow it in six months," Sain said. "I thought, 'this is crazy. There has to be a better way.'"

After researching consignment sales in other states, Sain decided to lease a large retail space for six weeks, giving her plenty of time to take in consignments and set up a store, then allow shoppers about a 10-

day window to make purchases. It's a win-win proposition, allowing families to recycle outgrown and unused items to earn cash, while other families get good deals on gently used necessities.

Open twice a year for fall/winter and spring/summer sales, the consignment store is operating in the former Grand Furniture Store space on Frost Avenue from 10 a.m. to 7 p.m. now through Monday, April 27.

On Sunday, items will be reduced by 25 percent and the prices will drop to 50 percent on Monday, Sain said, explaining that consignors decide whether items will be reduced during the sale or not. After being closed for a few days for organization and pick up, the store will offer remaining items at 75 percent off during a sale set for 2 to 7 p.m. on Saturday, May 2 and 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. on Sunday,

May 3. After that, items will be donated to local charities and organizers will clear out of the space by May 9.

As the prices drop, so does the inventory, Sain said. When the store opened for business Saturday morning, a line stretched from Kids Haven to the far side of the neighboring Bloom grocery store. By Tuesday morning, about 50 percent of the merchandise had been sold, she said.

In eight years, Sain said, Kids Haven has returned \$500,000 in sales to its consignors.

"Every sale gets bigger," she said, noting that during the two sales in 2008, Kids Haven worked with 600 consignors, handling about 60,000 items that generated about \$200,000 for consignors. The store also donated about \$35,000 in items to local charities, such as the Vint Hill Farms Transitional Housing Program, Community Touch, and Care Net Pregnancy Resource Center.

"Most of the time, we have the families come in and they can pick out what they want for the kids," Sain said. "It's very rewarding to be able to do that."

With everything from furniture and toys to kids clothes and maternity wear, the store is a one-stop show for families with young children.

"I have people tell me that this is the only place they shop for their kids," she said, noting that the prices are set by consignors, but there are strict quality standards in place.



Times-Democrat Staff Photo/Randy Litzinger

BARGAIN HUNTING: Dena Robert and her daughter Nyelle shop in one small section of the Kids' Haven Consignment Sale on Monday afternoon. More than 1,000 items were sold on opening day Saturday; thousands more remain.

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any of them?

For the most part, it's too soon to answer such questions. The Whites and others put their names on a sign-up list as being interested in the program and wanting more information about it.

"It's still very much in the development phase," Deputy

County Administrator Tony Hooper said during last week's information meeting.

Fauquier received a \$25,000 planning grant to prepare a competitive grant application for up to \$2 million to buy and renovate vacant foreclosed homes.

(A maximum \$25,000 per home may be spent on improvements. Renovation costs must be included in the resale price.)

Among other things, the

way the business runs, Sain said. "She basically knows how to do everything in the store," she said of her eldest child. "Maybe she'll want to run a business some day."

Sain relies not only on her family, but on dozens of volunteers who help organize the store, giving it a professional, retail appearance. In exchange, volunteers get to shop for items first in a pre-opening sale. Consignors also get to shop before the store opens to the public, Sain said.

Sain said that she spends about three months organizing

and orchestrating each sale. "This gives me the flexibility that I need," she said, noting that many people ask her about running the consignment shop year-round. "That gets into a whole different ballgame. It's not really what I wanted to do," she said. The temporary nature of the sale, Sain believes, is what makes it so successful. Consignors can clear out their items twice a year and shoppers respond well to the knowledge that the store will only be open for a limited time, she said.

For more information, visit www.kids-haven.com.

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