

Habitat ReStore would provide steady, predictable income to build homes

Store to offer building materials at discount

BY DON DEL ROSSO
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More than three years in the works, Fauquier Habitat for Humanity's building materials and supplies store hopes to open its doors by June.

At discounted prices, the ReStore at Warrenton Towne Centre on Frost Avenue will carry everything from dry-wall, flooring and cabinets to paint, major appliances and light fixtures.

If the ReStore idea succeeds here, as it has in 728 communities across the country, it will provide a steady and substantial source of revenue to build homes for qualified families and individuals, said Brenda Drerenberger, executive director of the local Habitat, which serves Fauquier and Rappahannock counties and whose budget last year totaled about \$350,000.

Habitat recently signed a five-year lease for the 15,922-square-foot space with shopping center owner Kalis Holdings LLC of McLean.

Drerenger put the first year's budget for the store, flanked by Food Lion and Tuesday Morning, at \$160,000 and projected revenue at \$50,000. Income should increase rapidly as word spreads about the store, which will rely on donated items to maintain its inventory.

The revenue the store generates will relieve Habitat of some traditional fundraising activities, which have suffered because of the economy, the exec-

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Brenda Drerenberger

utive director said.

The store also will help extend the life of the county landfill by recirculating materials that otherwise might be discarded, Drerenberger said.

"It's a win-win, no matter how you look at it," she said of the store's potential community benefits. "We're confident we're going to do well with it."

The ReStore will be "treated as a business," said Margaret Clarke, who served on a steering committee to find store space. "We need to build homes for people who need homes."

In its 21-year history, Fauquier Habitat has completed 44 homes. With the ReStore's anticipated revenue boost, the organization hopes to finish



Times-Democrat Staff Photo/Randy Litzinger

CHANGING LOCATIONS: Kids Haven Consignment shop owner Ange and Buddy Sain roll up carpet as they clean out their location near Gold's Gym and Food Lion in Warrenton. They will reopen the store in April at the former Blockbuster store, while Habitat for Humanity's ReStore will move into this location.

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its seven-duplex Warrenton project off Walker Drive in 2014.

In anticipation of opening the store, the nonprofit organization has filled six mini-storage units and probably will lease a seventh before moving in, Drerenberger said.

Many items are new or gently used, donated by large retailers that over-purchased items, contractors with surplus materials and people who remodel their homes.

The high quality and low prices attract all kinds of buyers, Drerenberger said.

"It's not just for people who can't afford" market prices, she said. "It's for people who are looking for bargains."

Habitat soon will begin advertising for a full-time manager to oversee the ReStore and

a volunteer staff, said Drerenberger, the chapter's only paid employee. The \$40,000 to \$45,000-per-year job will include benefits.

Kalis Holdings will pay for most of the space's improvements, including four heating, ventilation and air conditioning units, two handicapped-accessible bathrooms and a new security system, Drerenberger said.

For its part, Habitat will pay for a professional sign, phone lines, maintenance contracts, pest control services and wall panels to separate the sales floor from the sorting area.

"I'm thinking it will cost [the local organization] \$15,000 to \$16,000 to get in the door and open," the executive director said.

The store probably will be open three to four days per week for sales and one day "strictly for receiving donations," Drerenberger said. Because Habitat's a "Christian ministry," the store will be closed on

Sundays, she said.

Before committing to the Warrenton location, Habitat's ReStore steering committee and board of directors considered sites in Marshall and Bealeton.

But they concentrated on Warrenton because of its central location and extensive road network, which provides lots of people easy access to the area, steering committee member Linda Stouffer said.

"I think it's the right location," Stouffer said of the Warrenton Towne Centre space. "It gets a lot of traffic because of the Food Lion and [Gold's] gym."

Habitat board president Jim

Hricko, a Warrenton architect, likes the site for several reasons.

"The space is open and unencumbered, so it will be pretty easy" to design, said Hricko, who will help design the store layout. "It's got good visibility and good rear access for deliveries."

Habitat will use a donated box truck to pick up large donated items but will not, for the most part, deliver purchased goods to the new owners.

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