

Goodwill does good things

by Ruth Roberts

02.09.10 - 12:48 pm



The sign out front says “Goodwill” and the merchandise inside offers the varied selection you’d expect from the popular thrift shops. But that’s where the similarities end, because this shiny new facility on Lone Tree Way in Brentwood is definitely not your grandmother’s Goodwill store.

“Yes, I would say the perception of what a Goodwill store is has changed quite a bit over the years,” said Kimberly Scrafano, vice president of development and community affairs for Goodwill Industries. “And in this tough economy especially, lots of people are coming to our stores to shop and to donate. We’ve been busy.”



Very busy. Since opening the Brentwood location in December, the Goodwill store and adjacent donation center has been doing a brisk business, averaging around 45 customer donations per day, and thousands of new and gently-used items per month.

“People have been very generous (with their donations) and are looking to do good things for the community,” said Store Manager Miranda Mejia. “We’re doing really, really well.”

And it’s easy to see why. Clean, bright and stocked floor-to-ceiling with racks of items including men’s dress shirts, casual wear and ties (\$3.99 each), kitchenware, children and women’s clothing, and VCR and DVD movies (\$1 a piece), the Goodwill’s bargain prices appeal to its customers, but the quality keeps them coming back.

Just ask Denise Mullaney. Mullaney is a regular customer of the Brentwood store, where she shops for clothing and household items. The single mother of five said in these difficult financial times, a store like the Goodwill is a godsend.

“I shop here for everything,” said Mullaney, strolling through the aisles of mixing bowls and glassware. “With five kids who grow out of everything so quickly, this

is a great outlet for me. It's a nice store; very clean and well lit."

Items in the store are priced according to a rating of "good," "better" and "best," but no donation is turned away. Products that cannot be resold are broken down and recycled or sold to local businesses such as steel or glass vendors.

"We take everything and everything gets processed," said Mejia. "We try not to send people away. We want them to know their donation is appreciated."

Founded in 1919, Goodwill's community reach extends to 25 retail stores throughout the East Bay and provides more than 4,000 individuals each year in Alameda, Contra Costa and Solano counties with workforce opportunities and experience. A full 91 cents of every dollar spent in area stores stays local, going directly to the organization's job training and preparation programs.

"A lot of people don't really know what the Goodwill does, they just know that we do good things," said Scrafano. "It (Goodwill Industries) is a national brand that is familiar to people and one that they trust. They just didn't necessarily know it was about creating job opportunities."

Since the December opening, the Brentwood location has been able to hire eight store employees and provide for six apprentice positions. The trainee program offers hands-on experience in a work environment, but also provides for "soft-training" such as resumé writing, interview and computer skills plus general job demeanor.

"The apprentice program is for a year, and while they are working here they are also getting job training in other areas such as work etiquette and people skills," said Scrafano. "Our mission is to put people to work."

The Goodwill store is open Monday through Saturday from 9 a.m. to 8 p.m.; Sunday from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. Donations may be dropped off during regular store hours. For additional information, call 925-516-6412.