

## Thrift store managers asking for more donations to keep shelves stocked

By Laura Casey  
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Lisa Nguyen sorts clothes at the Goodwill corporate headquarters sorting facility on Thursday, April 23, 2009, in Oakland, Calif. (Jane Tyska/Staff)



Ryan Rubio, director of donations and resource recovery, sorts a bag of clothes at the Goodwill corporate headquarters sorting facility on Thursday, April 23, 2009, in Oakland, Calif. Goodwill thrift stores are in need of donations. The average bag of clothes is worth approximately \$50. (Jane Tyska/Staff)

Kevin Campbell has issued a plea that's being echoed by nonprofit thrift stores across the Bay Area: Please donate what you can.

"Any little thing at all, trust me, we can use it," said Campbell, general manager of retail operations for Hospice of the East Bay Thrift Shoppes, which raise money for Hospice of the East Bay.

Organizations that run thrift stores, such as Goodwill and the Salvation Army, are reporting a sharp decrease in donations of clothing and household items, making it harder to stock stores with the goods that their shoppers want at a time shoppers want it most.

For those nonprofits who keep statistics, the numbers show a worrisome trend. The Salvation Army of Oakland reports 7,740 fewer scheduled truck pickups this year from last year while the Goodwill of the Greater East Bay reports donations are down 6 percent since February. Vehicle donations at the Salvation Army are down, too, by 12 percent, and the average price for vehicles sold is \$500 less per car.

"We're hurting," said Renay Panoncialman of The Salvation Army. The religious organization, which in Oakland funds the food, shelter and drug rehabilitation for about 70 men for six months at a time, is deploying mobile donation units in neighborhoods to pick up goods.

"For us, just getting (The Salvation Army logo) out there is helping some," Panoncialman added.

Leaders of the nonprofits offer a couple theories as to why donations are down.

For starters, the economy is forcing people to shop less and save more and that includes saving older, out-of-style clothing or putting off that new sofa purchase.

"I think people are holding onto their things, " said Linda Catalano, chair of Turnstyle Thrift Shop Assistance League in San Mateo. "I think people are afraid to give anything away."

Also, because clothing and other household items have value, some folks are turning to consignment shops to sell clothing and furniture rather than give it away, Campbell said.

The lack of donations could have a negative affect on the community as nonprofit organizations are forced to cut back their programs.

At the Goodwill, an organization now in its 90th year of teaching job skills and training, 91 cents of every dollar made at a store goes to the center's programs.

"Our mission is to put people to work," says Kimberly Scrafano, vice president of development and community affairs for Goodwill of the Greater East Bay based out of Oakland. A line for a recent orientation meeting, where the Goodwill's many programs are matched to individuals who need them, formed two hours before the center's doors opened and snaked around the building.

"Our mission is really needed right now, as you can imagine. Lack of donations is going to hit our programs pretty significantly," she added. "We realize that people wait until they have a car full of stuff. But you if you can drop a small bag on the way to work, that would be helpful."

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General Material Donations Guidelines:

- Donate "gently used" men's, women's and children's clothing, housewares and small appliances in working order. Ask yourself, "Would I give this to a friend or a family member?"
  - A typical trash bag full of clothing could be worth \$50 or more to a nonprofit agency.
  - Do not donate broken or soiled items, recalled items, infant car seats or cribs, chemicals, mattresses or bed pillows, gas-powered yard tools, broken electronics.
  - Donate when stores or donation centers are open. Do not leave things outside overnight - they could get ruined by weather.
- From [www.eastbaygoodwill.org](http://www.eastbaygoodwill.org)