

SEASONED OBSERVER

Treasure Hunters

Thrift Shop Volunteers Scour Donations for Values

BY JILL RAGAR ESFELD
Catholic News Service

As a volunteer at TurnStyles, the thrift store of Catholic Charities of Northeast Kansas in Overland Park, Kan., Tom White is on the hunt for donated items that prove the old adage: “One man’s trash is another man’s treasure.”

As a member of its elite eBay team, in fact, the parishioner at Holy Spirit Church in Overland Park has been trained to recycle that donated “trash” into the “treasure” that will keep Catholic Charities programs rolling — with a little help from cyberspace shoppers.

Not too long ago, for example, White’s eyes kept falling on an odd piece of office equipment in the furniture section of the thrift store.

“It looked like an old adding machine or something,” he said. “They had \$3 marked on it.

“I went to the Internet and checked it out,” he said. The old adding machine was actually one of the first Hollerith punch card machines, built under contract for the U.S. Census Bureau to calculate the 1890 census.

White posted the item online at the TurnStyles eBay store. A California museum bought it for \$300.

“I’ve had higher sales,” White confessed. “But that was the most satisfying because I salvaged a piece of history.”

Since the eBay Team was formed four years ago, it has sold to customers in all 50 states and 30 countries around the world, generating more than \$56,000 for Catholic Charities of Northeast Kansas.

“We’ve got a gold mine going here,” said

head volunteer and eBay team leader Ron Behm.

Behm, a member of Holy Spirit Parish, came to his position reluctantly.

He had no experience with eBay and very little experience with a computer. But he was recruited for more important qualities

— an extensive background in sales and a natural ability to organize and motivate people.

Now the eBay team consists of 15 volunteers divided into five three-member teams. Each team works one afternoon a week.

“A lot of times you don’t find much,” said White. “And a lot of times you find a bonanza.”

Bess Michaelson, a parishioner at Cure of Ars Parish in Leawood, is on the eBay team and also volunteers in the thrift store on Fridays — that’s when she shops for her product.

“People know I’m on eBay so they save stuff for me,” she said. “Plus, in the sorting room, they know to save good stuff in the barrel. If there’s something you’re interested in, you take it out.”

The barrel Michaelson refers to is a treasure trove of items identified by volunteers as they sort incoming donations.

“Bob (Neugent) ... the assistant store manager brought me an Oakley watch the other day, Behm said. It sold on eBay for \$372.

Some recent treasures include a Rogers Brothers antique silver plate flatware, \$610; an antique German grandfather wall clock, \$300; a metal detector, \$420; and a George Jensen sterling silver bracelet, \$455.

“And those successes don’t come from any particular skill set,” said Behm. “It’s called luck.”



(CNS photo/Jill Ragar Esfeld, The Leaven)

Dennis Koozeniewski, left, a TurnStyles thrift store volunteer, gets a quick lesson in late October in identifying valuable merchandise from eBay team leader Ronald Behm in Overland Park, Kan.



(Photo by Sam Lucero, The Compass, Official Newspaper of the Catholic Diocese of Green Bay)

Worshippers pray in the crypt, in the spot where the Blessed Mother appeared to Adele Brise in 1859. The crypt is located just below the Shrine of Our Lady of Good Help chapel.

Shrine of Our Lady of Good Help Champion, Wis.

Destination: On Dec. 8, Bishop David Ricken of the Diocese of Green Bay (Wis.) approved the Shrine of Our Lady of Good Help the as first and only site in the United States where the Blessed Virgin Mary appeared.

Masses are 8 a.m. Monday, 8:30 a.m. Tuesday, 7 p.m. Wednesday and 8 a.m. Saturday. There is an 8 a.m. First Friday Mass. There are no Masses on Sunday and Thursday. There is a 2 p.m. Holy Hour on Sunday.

Why to go: In October 1859, Adele Brise, a Belgian immigrant, saw Mary, “The Queen of Heaven,” three times at the northern Wisconsin site. It was just a year after the Marian apparitions at Lourdes. Now known as Champion, the town was called Rob-insonville in 1859.

In her third visit, Mary asked Adele to work to bring the area’s Native Americans to Jesus by teaching them prayers and about the sacraments. She took the request very seriously and, called Sister Adele, devoted her life to teaching others about God.



(CNS photo)

Adele’s father built a crude chapel between the two trees where Mary appeared. Today, there is a small church on the spot.

Special events: Since 1861, there has been an outdoor Mass on Aug. 15, the Feast of the Assumption. It includes a rosary procession around the outer parameter of the shrine grounds, something the first devotees did during the Peshtigo Fire. Remarkably, the site was spared when the fire took 2,500 lives in northern Wisconsin on the same day as the Great Chicago Fire, Oct. 8, 1871.

Access: The crypt over the original apparition site is on the lower level of the chapel.

(Grand) Kid friendly: Sister Adele founded a free school for children; she would welcome young visitors today.

Info: Address — Shrine of Our Lady of Good Help, 4047 Chapel Dr., Champion, WI 54229. Phone — 920/866-2571. Web — www.shrineofourladyofgoodhelp.com

— Compiled by Sharon Boehlefeld



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