

Bargains Galore salutes volunteers: heart of success

by Jim Weigert

A motorist driving by 810 W. Main St. in Waupun at about 9:30 a.m. on Thursday, Friday or Saturday might be puzzled by the sight. Here in the midst of a stubborn recession is a line of dozens of people waiting outside the Bargains Galore Thrift Store. Is this a rare event—like snow in the first week of April—or is the waiting crowd a regular thing?

The folks in line are bargain hunters in the best American tradition, lining up early for a chance to bag a one-of-a-kind item at a good price. People from every age group, occupation, and ethnicity make up the clientele.

Once the doors open, some hurry straight for the clothing department, where a single mother can tell you,

“I can come in here with \$20 and buy a lot of clothes for my kids.” Other shoppers, not quite so rushed, check what’s available in the crafts, books and music, or antiques department.

Store and Donation Center Hours:
 Thursday 10 a.m.-8 p.m.;
 Friday and Saturday 10 a.m.-2 p.m.
Call 324-8677

Each item in the store is unique, in that once it’s sold, it’s gone. Some shoppers move quickly, scanning the ever-changing inventory for that special deal that will become bragging rights, once they get it home.

The surprise for another shopper might be running into an old neighbor or a long lost friend. “Where ya

been all winter?” These conversations can spin on for a half hour before anybody notices.

If you’re in a really talkative mood there’s even a snack bar where you can sit awhile and have a cup of coffee. Bargains Galore is a spacious 20,000 sq. ft facility, attractively decorated and state of the art in terms of organization and efficiency.

How and why does this all happen? The store is only open 18 hours per week. That would seem like a poor marketing strategy to the big box store executives, but at Bargains Galore, everything works according to a unique, well-developed plan.

At the heart of the plan are Volunteers, 185 of them to be exact. They are the story behind the store. What better time to recognize those who make a difference than during this National Volunteer Appreciation Week. And while each Volunteer makes some type of sacrifice, there’s nothing half-hearted about their belief in the store’s Mission. It has to do with the end result. The goal is community enrichment by way of Christian education.

Carol Jansma, sorting through a colorful mountain of newly-arrived clothing, explains: “All four of my kids went through the Christian Schools, and now I have two grandchildren there also.” She works from 7 to 11 a.m., carefully checking each item, putting aside anything missing a button or needing a new zipper, etc.

LeAnne Holden, donation attendant, keeps one eye on the drive-up door. Dropping off a donation can



Larry Duer photo

In recognition of National Volunteer Week, and appreciation for their 185 awesome volunteers, Bargains Galore Thrift Store honored their volunteers with a breakfast on Saturday, April 24, served at the Central Wisconsin High School gymnasium. An example of their selfless service can be seen every Thursday, Friday and Saturday, when the Bargains Galore Thrift Store, located at 810 W. Main St., in Waupun, opens for business. With only four actual employees, Bargains Galore is as close to being an all-volunteer operation as one might expect. Jeannette Winkel, left, Alice Posthuma, and Angela Buwalda, all are nine-year volunteers. All three have worked since the store opened in 1971.



Larry Duer photo

Bargains Galore Thrift Store volunteers are the heart of the store’s success. The store raises funds for Central Wisconsin Christian Schools by selling tax-deductible donations received from generous people throughout the community. A recent three-day sale in March exceeded \$13,000 in sales! The store recently completed a new expansion which now makes the building a 20,000-square-foot facility. Arlene DeJager, left, a nine-year volunteer, and Margaret Miedema, a five-year volunteer, wait on a customer.

be as quick and easy as drive-thru service at a fast food restaurant. She’s one of only four paid employees at Bargains Galore, and shares her philosophy on donations: “We can use most anything. As long as it’s in good shape, somebody can use it.”

And if something needs a bit of tinkering, the ‘boys next door’ at the repair shop can tackle just about anything that plugs in, lights up, or makes noise. Sid Soodsma has been on board since 2001, when he retired from farming and 39 years at Silgan Containers. “I check all the electrical items that come in, and make a note on the ticket if there’s anything wrong.”

He hadn’t planned on doing this type of work in ‘retirement,’ but, like many a good husband would say, “My wife got me involved. Before I started here I was never in a thrift store.”

Bargains Galore is many things to many people. Another Volunteer, Audrey Zamzow, sorts items from cardboard boxes delivered to her counter by LeAnne. “Joyce Haan and I were friends before we started working at this, but now we’ve gotten to know each other even better. It’s great.”

Behind Audrey along the wall is a tall ‘cage’ that’s labeled “Stuffed Animals.” It provides ‘temporary shelter’ to a menagerie that would rival Noah’s passenger list on the Ark. “I used to take all the animals home, wash them, and hang them out to dry on the clothesline.” Did her neighbors wonder at the sight of this? That question will have to remain a part of the Bargains Galore puzzle.

People wait in a checkout line, which turns back and forth like a corn maze. Its design provides the most democratic system for the shopper waiting, and makes the most efficient use of floor space.

Cashier Alice Posthuma takes interest in where the customers come from. “If I’ve never seen them before I like to ask. This week

we’ve had people from Fond du Lac, Horicon, Ripon, Fairwater, and Markesan.” Just to name a few. And Bargains Galore is always ready to serve a wider audience.

The Mission Statement is prominently displayed on the wall behind the cashiers. It starts with a box of items you might not need, and the Volunteers make something wonderful happen. The students of Central Wisconsin Christian Schools, their families and the community receive the best of benefits.

Anyone who’s curious about Bargains Galore should stop in some time and have a look around. You can also visit their website: www.BargainsGaloreThriftStore.com.

Whether it’s donating some ‘no-longer-needed items,’ signing up as a Volunteer, or shopping for a one-of-a-kind deal, you might soon find yourself becoming one of the ‘missing pieces’ of the Bargains Galore puzzle.

By the way, picture puzzles can be found in toy department, starting at 25 cents.

Dodge County Senior Menu for the Month of May

- 3** Roast Turkey
Mashed Potatoes
Baby Carrots
Cranberry Gelatin
Sliced Bread
- 4** Hawaiian Meatballs
Red Skin Potatoes
Summer Blend
Vegetables
Coconut Cream Pie
Dinner Roll
- 5** Pork Steak in
Jaegerschnizel Sauce
Mashed Potatoes
Pickled Beet Salad
Applesauce
Sliced Bread
- 6** Chicken Breast
Mashed Potatoes
Green Bean Cass.
Birthday Cake
Dinner Roll
- 7** Baked Spaghetti
(includes vegetable
Mixed Italian Salad
Cantaloupe Slice
French Bread
- 10** Swiss Steak
Mashed Potatoes
Peas and Carrots
Cream Sicle Torte
Sliced Bread
- 11** Glazed Ham
Sweet Potato Bake
Cole Slaw
Pear Slices
Dinner Roll
- 12** Baked Chicken
Mashed Potatoes
Tossed Salad
Orange Sherbet
Sliced Bread
- 13** Chili Casserole
includes vegetable
Corn
Petite Banana
Cornbread
- 14** Smoked Sausage
Red Skin Potatoes
Mixed Vegetables
Chocolate Chip
Cookie
Sliced Bread
- 17** Chicken Breast
Mashed Potatoes
Carrots
Pineapple Tidbits
Sliced Bread
- 18** Escalloped Potatoes
and Ham Casserole
California Blend
Vegetables
Egg Custard Pie
Dinner Roll

- 19** Pepper Steak
Au Gratin Potatoes
Peas/Pearl Onions
Peach Slices
Sliced Bread
- 20** Chicken, Broccoli
and Rice Casserole
Spinach Salad with
Hot Bacon Dressing
Ambrosia Dessert
Dinner Roll
- 21** Swedish Meatballs
Mashed Potatoes
Green Beans
Fruited Gelatin
Sliced Bread
- 24** Meatloaf
Cheesy Potato Bake
Winter-Blend
Vegetables
Fruit and Pudding
Sliced Bread
- 25** Baked Chicken
Twice Bk Style Pot.
Copper Penny Salad
Butterfinger Torte
Dinner Roll
- 26** Ham Rolls
Squash
Health Slaw
Applesauce
Sliced Bread

- 27** Beef Stroganoff
Casserole (incl. veg.)
Tossed Salad
Carrot Cake with
CreamCheese Frosting
Dinner Roll
- 28** Bratwurst on a Bun
German Potato
Salad
Peas and Carrots
Pineapple Tidbits
- 31** Closed
Memorial Day

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