

Name Changes but Mission Remains the Same

As you drive by the thrift stores in Bend, Madras and Redmond, you may notice a new name but don't worry, the mission remains the same.

The Opportunity Foundation Thrift Stores are now Possibilities Thrift Stores, according to Angie Blake, manager of the Madras store. "We wanted a name that reflected the main purpose of our thrift stores -- supporting possibilities for people with disabilities."

Thrift stores have been part of The Opportunity Foundation since the first one was founded in Redmond in 1973. Now, 36 years later, the organization has three that serve many functions. Things given to thrift stores are an important donation to the community from people who want to recycle household goods, clothing and sports equipment. In turn, they are a cost-effective shopping option for families looking for gently used, affordable goods. "We have many regular customers," said Blake, "and business has been pretty steady, despite access issues because ODOT has closed the main entrance to the store due to construction on Highway 97." Instead, use the Fairground Road to reach the store, she said.

While the stream of donations to all the stores slowed down early in 2009, things are picking up again, said Blake "That's important because donations are our bread and butter," she said. She reminds everyone to think first of donating to The Opportunity Foundation, as a steady stream of quality inventory is critical to keeping customers coming back.

Financially, the thrift stores generate a significant income stream for The Opportunity Foundation, but perhaps most important is the employment and social opportunities they offer to clients. Currently, more than 90 clients work in area thrift stores, helping with sorting donations, pricing, stocking inventory, keeping things clean and organized, taking care of customers and cashiering. "In fact, the clients do the majority of the work," explained Blake. "We all pitch in and do our regular routine of chores to keep the stores clean and running."

In addition, the Madras store has a large recycling operation, where paper and cardboard is sold to International Paper, plastic is recycled, and some used clothing is baled and sent to Third World countries.

"We're always looking for new ways our clients can contribute," said Blake. "That's what the word possibilities is all about."



(Left to Right) Board Member Edd Doorn, Bend Store Manager Vera Farrell (with scissors), and Resource Developer Suzanne Michaels welcome Bend Chamber members to its Ribbon Cutting at the Bend store in June.

Drop off your gently used donations of apparel, furniture, household items, appliances, books and videos at **Possibilities Thrift Store** located in Bend (541-389-0129), Redmond (541-548-5288) and Madras (541-475-6961). Store hours are 9:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Saturday; donations are accepted 9:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. on the same days. In addition, the thrift stores are offering pick up and delivery services for large appliances and furniture donated to or purchased from one of their locations.

Life Skills Taking Hold

Things are shrinking around The Opportunity Foundation campus in Redmond. Well, not really things, but people. Three staff, known as “The Trio” around the office, has collectively lost 215 pounds over the last year using the Weight Watchers’ program as their tool.

“We just realized we were tired of being fat,” said Adrian White, finance director, bluntly. She and her co-workers Pam Hopper and Sue Hopper joined Weight Watchers together on a Tuesday after talking about it on Monday. “It works for me because it’s not a diet,” explained White. “It’s a choice. I choose what to eat or not eat.” That attitude, combined with exercise and the support of her co-workers, has helped White lose 60 pounds, reaching her goal and now maintaining a healthy weight. Pam Hopper has also reached her goal, while Sue Hopper has just a few more pounds to go.

Clients have made changes too.

Tony and Joann have each lost more than 100 pounds. Tony, a client since 1992, lost weight by cutting down on the amount of bread and ice cream he eats. “I realized I was eating too much of the wrong kinds of foods,” Tony told Suzanne Michaels, Resource Developer. Joann, who works in the shred department, was borderline for diabetes and getting high blood pressure so she decided to change her lifestyle, and is now feeling much better. Dawn, who has been with The Opportunity Foundation for nine years, has lost more than 30 pounds by watching her portions and cutting down on snacks.

In addition to eating smarter, Weight Watchers encourages people to “move more.” Tony is a recognizable sight in Redmond, covering miles every day as he walks to and from each end of town.

Perhaps he got his inspiration from The Trio, as the group routinely walks during morning and afternoon breaks, and during lunch, according to White. She also hikes up Misery Ridge at Smith Rock State Park about three times a week before work, and takes a kickboxing class at least once a week. Joann and Dawn also walk, bike, and do sit-ups every day.

Helping clients make good choices about when and what to eat is part of the Life Skills program, and Candace Barnet, receptionist, thinks it’s important that staff recognize they are setting examples. “How can we educate our clients about healthy lifestyles when we’re overweight and seen eating junk food at our desks,” she asked? So, she’s done her part along with other co-workers Susan Gilmore and Michaels, contributing to a collective total of more than 450 pounds lost at The Opportunity Foundation.

And that’s a loss not missed!



Following through with their weight loss goals: Dawn (left photo); Pam Hopper, Adrian White and Sue Hopper (middle photo); Tony (right photo)

Gifts and Grants Gratefully Accepted

Grants are an important part of fundraising to support The Opportunity Foundation, but individual donations are essential to sustaining the financial health and viability of the organization because they support operating budgets including staff salaries, operating and program expenses. You can donate directly via the web site at www.ofco.org, or call Suzanne Michaels at 541-548-2611 to talk about including The Opportunity Foundation in estate planning.

The Opportunity Foundation is deeply grateful to the people and businesses supporting “possibilities” in our communities:

Nosler Inc.
Painted Desert Salon
Mr. & Mrs. Allan Rose Jr.
John & Lari Hodecker
Mrs. Peggy Cushman
Mr. & Mrs. Deak Preble
Mr. & Mrs. Randall Shelton

The Opportunity Foundation wishes to thank these foundations for their support:

M.J. Murdock Charitable Trust
\$50,000
Ann & Bill Swindells Charitable Trust
\$30,000

Plan on the 9th Annual DD Ranch Run

“This year we want to take full advantage of everything the DD Ranch offers,” said Suzanne Michaels, Resource Developer. “This includes the beautiful fall colors in Terrebonne, the pumpkin patch, petting zoo and the great hamburgers and home-made potato chips Mike Duggan and his team are famous for.” The event will still feature a 5-K cross country run over a competitive course designed by the Bend Running Club, but walkers are also welcome and the entire event will be more family friendly, said Michaels, including a children’s play area, games and arts and crafts.

“What we’d really love is for lots of people to come out to celebrate the beginning of fall, enjoy a day at the DD Ranch, and learn more about The Opportunity Foundation,” concluded Michaels.



Clients John (left) and Gerald looking sharp at the DD Ranch.

Date: Saturday, Sept. 26

Time: Race registration starts at 8 a.m.; race starts at 9 a.m. Families are welcome to enjoy the course and the ranch all day. First 25 people to register for the race will receive a free pumpkin!

Cost: Runners – Adults - \$15 per person; Youth 9-18 - \$10; Under 8 - Free

Non-runners will be charged \$15 per carload of people

Free petting zoo and children’s play area

Register at www.ofco.org or by calling 541-548-2611.

Thanks Ruralite!

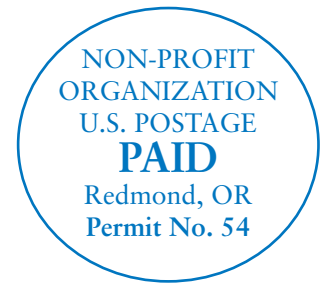
The Opportunity Foundation was featured in the June 2009 issue of Ruralite, the membership newsletter produced by the Central Electric Cooperative. The four-page article covered the history of the organization, founded in 1965, and how relevant the mission remains today.

“Telling its own story again and again can get hard for a non-profit that has served the region for more than 40 years,” said Darrel Wilson, executive director. “So, its very meaningful when another organization steps up to share our story and add their own perspectives to it.” Wilson encourages readers to log on to www.ofco.org to read the full article.

“Much has changed and evolved over the past four decades,” he continued, referring to more open attitudes towards people with disabilities and more opportunities for them in terms of education, employment and independent living. But much remains to be done, and The Opportunity Foundation will continue to lead Central Oregon in “supporting possibilities, not disabilities.”



P.O. Box 430
Redmond, Oregon 97756



Make a difference in the life of a person with a disability...

Become a Direct Support Professional or Vocational Aide today!

Contact Human Resources at 541-548-2611 or see openings at www.ofco.org

News & Notes

Welcome Christy Ward to the Friends For Opportunities Board

Christy Ward, born and raised in Central Oregon, has joined the FFO board. Christy is a Personal Banker at Columbia River Bank in Redmond. She has volunteered at various events in the past and felt she needed to contribute more. "To be a part of an organization that has done so many good things, for so many good people, for so many years, is an honor," said Christy.

Clients Speak Up

In June, clients Brandon and Spencer attended the Prineville City Council meeting to speak about how important the transportation services provided by Cascades East Transit are to The Opportunity Foundation. As a result of their comments, the Council committed \$ 7,500 to support public transportation. Mayor Mike Wendel confirmed that Brandon and Spencer's comments were an important influence on the Council's decision.

Celebrating Together

Clients, their families, staff, board members and Opportunity Foundation supporters gathered together on July 24 to celebrate each other and the organization's accomplishments over the last year. More than 300 people enjoyed barbequed burgers, side dishes, a dunk tank, and comments by Board President Bill Schertzing and Board Member Sylvia Goedeck. According to everyone, "it was a "great time!"

Save the Date

The Opportunity Foundation is happy to host the Redmond Chamber's Monthly Coffee Clatter on Oct. 30 from 8:30 a.m. to 9:30 a.m. Learn more about the Opportunity Foundation and network with other Redmond businesses at 835 E. Highway 126, Redmond.