

Resale clothes carry bigger variety, brand-name products these days

BY BETHANY BROADWELL
Special to the Record-Eagle

With some careful shopping, local families preparing for the start of the school year can reduce their anxiety about checkbook strain.

Several community resale businesses offer a means of outfitting students in style for a fraction of the price of typical retail stores.

According to Ruth Blick, director of marketing and retail operations for the Traverse City Goodwill Store, value is a prime reason to check out the merchandise. She estimated children's clothing sells for \$1.65 per piece, most tops for teens cost about \$3.50 and jeans run about \$5.25 a pair. Plus, every day tags of a designated color are 50 percent off the marked price, she said.

"We have thousands of name brand quality items to choose from. Our Traverse City store puts out about 3,000 new pieces of clothing every day," Blick explained.

Goodwill items only stay on the sales floor for three weeks.

"We are constantly changing merchandise by the minute," she said.

Blick described the store's variety: "We carry it all. Our

merchandise lets our customers dress like themselves, not like everyone else. Retro, contemporary, preppy, nerdy, casual, dressy — we've got it for just about every age, shape and size."

In case someone needs to make a return, Goodwill offers a cash refund policy to its customers. Blick added that the store works with families at back-to-school time through the Department of Human Services and provides a 20 percent discount to those receiving assistance from the agency.

Customers who purchase Goodwill store merchandise can also feel good knowing they are buying items from a venue that provides 70 percent of the operating budget for Goodwill programs, like the Goodwill Inn Homeless Shelter, the Whiting and Transitional Housing and the Workers on Wheels program, which provides vehicles to area families so they can maintain and improve employment.

Three million pounds of clothing that did not meet Goodwill quality standards were recycled last year, Blick said.

"Proceeds from the items listed at this Goodwill stay

at this Goodwill," she said.

Blick noted that Shopgoodwill.com is a national Goodwill auction site, much like eBay.

"Everyone — young, old, disadvantaged and advantaged — everyone likes a treasure and a great buy. It's fun and addictive." Blick concluded, "You may never want to pay retail again."

Lynne Chapman of Interlochen is a mother who understands the appeal of finding a Goodwill bargain. She makes a habit of checking the store when she is school shopping for her 11-year-old son and daughter, soon-to-turn 16.

"I go to Goodwill to shop so my kids can have more nice things for school. If I go to the mall, they may only get three or four new outfits," Chapman said. "If I shop through the summer at Goodwill, they usually end up with 10-15 very nice outfits."

From winter jackets to jeans, Chapman said she finds plenty of brand name items including Old Navy, Gap and Nike.

"It lets me get my kids more with less cash," Chapman said. "Shopping at Goodwill lets me get them new clothes throughout the school year, instead of only

being able to shop just before school starts and then not having any money left for the rest of the school year.

Goodwill has locations in Cadillac and Gaylord, and the Traverse City Goodwill Store is located at 2279 South Airport West. Store and donation hours are Monday - Saturday from 9 a.m. to 7 p.m. and Sunday from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. For more information, call 922-4826.

The Women's Resource Center Thrift Shop is another back-to-school resource where the proceeds benefit the community.

Assistant manager Patty Joslin-Scheffer described that in addition to clothing, backpacks and supplies are among the merchandise customers may be able to find at the store.

The items for sale change almost daily and the staff depends on volunteers to help keep it all in order. Anyone can volunteer and those who do receive an in-store credit.

Donations can be made to the Women's Resource Center Thrift Shop, located at 1719 S. Garfield Ave., Monday - Saturday from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. The store is open for business Monday -

Saturday from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. For more information call 946-4180.

Act II Consignment is a store teenage girls and adult women might check for back-to-school fashions.

Store owner Pam Haney estimated customers can get quality brand names for one-third of the retail cost. They take in items everyday ranging from women's clothing to accessories and lingerie to wedding gowns and keep the merchandise for 60 days.

Haney said those who frequent her shop are impressed with her business' organization and selection.

"They often say also that they need more time because there is so much," Haney said.

Act II Consignment, located at 1603 Barlow St., has store hours Monday - Friday from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. and Saturday from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. For more information, call 946-4409.

For younger customers who need smaller sizes, Children's Orchard, at 2020 S. Airport Rd. West, is a resale store that carries gently-used children's clothing in sizes preemie to 10/12, brand name toys and equipment.

Children's Orchard resale items are priced from 50 to 70 percent off the retail price. Those that fail to sell within the first month are marked down 50 percent to make room for more inventory.

Children's Orchard often carries name brands, including Gap, Gymboree, Old Navy, Levi, Limited Too and Ralph Lauren for somewhere between \$1.99 and \$6.99. The store has a "play-wear" area, too, where slightly imperfect clothes are priced from \$1 to \$3.

Children's Orchard owner Tracey Gabel explained that customers' merchandise is purchased by appointment.

"We pay cash on the spot or store credit with a 40 percent bonus. We buy all seasons all the time including winter coats, boots and Halloween costumes," Gabel said, "We pride ourselves in having a clean, bright and cheery atmosphere. Customer service is our main priority."

Children's Orchard hours are Monday - Friday from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. and Saturday from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. For more information, call 929-1700.

Bethany Broadwell is a local freelance writer.

Schools try to find a balance with student gadgets

BY SAMANTHA CRITCHELL
The Associated Press

NEW YORK — For a lot of kids, back-to-school shopping means checking out the latest technological gadgetry. These gizmos, though, aren't always welcome in classrooms.

Sure, the Internet opened a wealth of research sources to students, and a cell phone is pretty handy in an emergency. But the beep that comes from a single Tamagotchi is enough to disrupt an entire class.

The little virtual pet from Japan is expected to make a comeback this year and new gadgets, including Gizmondo from Tiger Telematics — a handheld console that includes GPS satellite tracking, a digital camera and a gyroscope, and can play digital music, movies and video games — are just entering the scene.

"We went from a code of conduct that talked about tape recorders to CD players to an iPod. Each time technology improves, it creates a new problem for school districts," says Pat Ackley, principal at New Lebanon Jr./Sr. High School in rural New York.

The school has specifically forbidden the Tamagotchi.

"We don't allow toys. We'd say the same thing about pet rocks," Ackley said.

Young consumers tell The Zandl Group, a trend research firm, that when shopping for school this year they're most interested in "tech goodies" including Apple's iPod music player, Playstation Portables and Nintendo Game Boys, according to Irma Zandl, the group's president.

Last year, the National Consumer Federation predicted that nearly half of

families with school-age children would buy electronics and computer-related equipment for the new school year, and would spend more on that category than on traditional school supplies: \$101 vs. \$73.

Schools, however, discourage kids from toting much of this electronic gear in their backpacks.

The official policy at Westover High School in Fayetteville, N.C., is that everything from tape players to electronic games — all "sound producing instruments or equipment" — is forbidden on school grounds and even buses between 7 a.m. and 3:30 p.m.

That hasn't stopped Micelli Bianchini from bringing his phone, which also holds his dayplanner, to school each day, and when he returns for senior year this fall he

expects to be carrying an iPod, too. His friends are similarly equipped, he says.

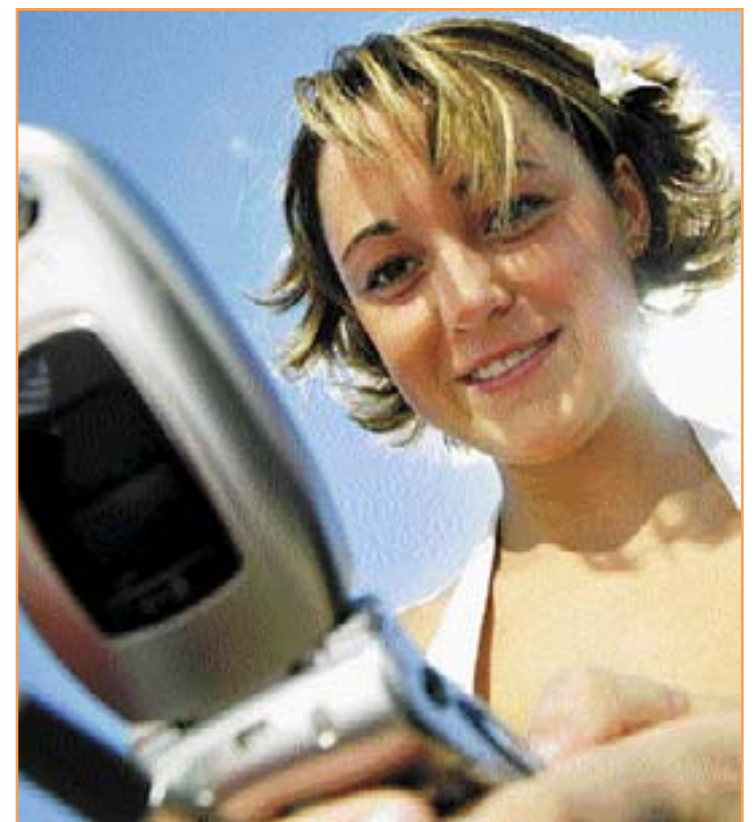
"You can't let teachers see you use these things. They don't want you talking on your phone in the middle of class. Put it in your pocket and no one really bothers you," Micelli said.

The 17-year-old, who is ranked third in his class, recently led a successful community service project to collect supplies for an orphanage in Guyana.

PLEASE SEE PAGE 6

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Sixteen-year-old Tory Jones uses the text messaging function on a cell phone to message a friend from a park in Broomfield, Colo., before going back to school.



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