

# Tips for Making a Thrift Store "Customer Friendly"

*Insight from the thrift store ministry  
at St. John's in Huntington*



# Mimic the layout of a retail store

Group clothes according to type, style, size, season, women's, men's, and children. If you can, dedicate a volunteer to steam out wrinkles before clothes are displayed. Hang mirrors in convenient locations. Separate out a small section of the store with a curtain to make a dressing room.



# Organize, organize, organize!

Develop a system and partnership for all incoming donations. Where will you donate clothes that don't sell? How will you store off-season items? Where can you recycle and dispose of items that don't meet your store's standards?



# Delegate

Volunteer retention is likely to increase when volunteers know what their responsibilities are, when they feel connected and appreciated, and when they see their role as vital to the flourishing of the ministry. In most cases, it's important to have a regular schedule and regular responsibilities to help volunteers remain dedicated to their work and the ministry overall.



# Use a color-coded tagging system

Tag each item with a specific color based on the season and year they are displayed, so volunteers know how long each item has been available to purchase. For example, Winter 2023 can be blue; Spring 2023 can be green. Items that don't sell within the appropriate season are discounted and moved to a clearance section. If they continue not to sell, they'll be donated.



# Prioritize caring for the community

In some cases, neighbors visit thrift stores needing additional support, including referrals for housing, social services, affordable food, or protection from a violent situation at home. Thrift store ministries should have a list of contacts and resources on hand to support those who ask for referrals.

# Agree on a price point

Prices are often based upon the item's condition, age, and original value. Consider tagging your items with prices to ensure pricing transparency for both customers and volunteers. If items aren't selling within a season, move items to a discounted area of your store. Remain flexible on pricing, especially for customers who have requested additional support. Remember that thrift stores are *both* a vibrant ministry and revenue source for your church.



# How can we support your thrift ministry?

Do you need support building community partnerships to make referrals? Do you need to purchase additional storage capacity to organize donations? Could you benefit from learning from other thrift store ministries throughout the diocese?

*Send us an email at [emli@dioceseli.org](mailto:emli@dioceseli.org) to connect to thrift store ministries & access additional resources.*