



**Fall Edition
Qrt. 4, 2026**

CMCR's Scrapped!™

News and Tips to Help Thrift Stores Source and Sell Used Clothing.

Introducing! Rivertown Treasures and Mary Kells, Store Manager



Staff and Volunteers

Hastings Family Service was founded in 1970 with the goal of engaging the community to provide help and hope to neighbors. Rivertown Treasures supports that mission in three ways. The revenue that is generated supports the food shelf and other programs. We offer free clothing and household items through a voucher program to neighbors in need, and we keep prices low so that we can give great options to people who may be living on tight budgets. Rivertown Treasures is also a place where volunteers can contribute their time and talents, and community members can enjoy a fun shopping experience.

What I enjoy most about my role is working with the volunteers. We all have the same passion for creating a clean and organized store. And, we are a big family!

Editor's note: If you have an unusual, insightful or funny story to tell us, please email us at:
jbarker@sytekcom.com



One of our perennial strengths is the incredible support in donations that we receive from the community. The quality and wide variety of donations that we receive contribute to the fact that many first-time customers don't realize they've walked into a thrift store!

Our dedicated volunteers work hard to ensure that we have quality merchandise, great pricing and a pleasant shopping experience for customers as well. We strive to create a dignified and welcoming experience for neighbors utilizing the voucher program.

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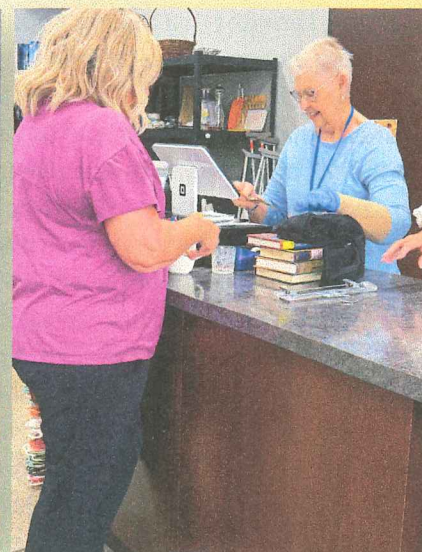
You can find this and past editions of Scrapped at
www.centralminnesota-clothingresource.com/forms-and-instructions

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Office Hours:
M-Sat. 10am-6pm
Collection Days:
M-F 8am-7pm



Ruth in front of vintage toys



Karen helping a customer



A Focus on Efficiency

In the industry of thrift surplus management, CMCR is pretty unique! When we started fourteen years ago, the international price of mixed rags, which is excess thrift store clothing, was 40% higher than it is today. This huge global drop in price of clothing over the 15 years, against ever-increasing labor, insurance and fuel costs, have pushed many US textile recyclers out of business or to the brink of collapse. In fact, the U.S. based textile grading industry is really a shadow of what it used to be back in 2012 because of these factors.

This new market reality has forced us at CMCR to sink or swim. And we are thankful to say, we have learned to swim! With all honesty, it hasn't been easy. Yet it has made us better, in that we have invented some material handling techniques that are very unique in our industry.

We may be the only thrift surplus handler in the Midwest that lends rolling carts to its supply partners for convenient handling of their surplus donations! It was clear to us when we started our hard goods program that getting product on wheels would save time and work better for all of us.

Second, we unload our trucks late in the evening of the same day of your route, making that same truck available again the next day. Most collection companies unload the following day to avoid taking on an evening shift. This creates the need for two trucks for every route and doubles your fleet costs. Fewer trucks means fewer costs.

Thirdly, we unload our trucks using a small skidloader and a hand-designed, high-capacity bucket, specially

created to not tear or snag clothing. This allows us to unload approximately 8,000lbs of clothing in 1 hour, something that takes other companies nearly 8 labor hours to accomplish.

We are continually looking for ways to automate and save both labor, fuel and costs such as providing outdoor storage devices for stores that are very remote to reduce fuel and pick-up frequency. All this ensures we continue to provide the same great service to you even when diesel costs \$6/gallon! In fact, over the past 14 years, our recycling program has grown from handling 200,000lbs annually to an estimated 7 millions pounds in 2026. Yet our staffing remains the same. We have been a five-member team for over a decade.

I hope by sharing our story it inspires you as a manager to think creatively about how to move and process donations and utilize your labor wisely. Efficiency is a great way to improve margins if costs rise or your customers are very price-sensitive.

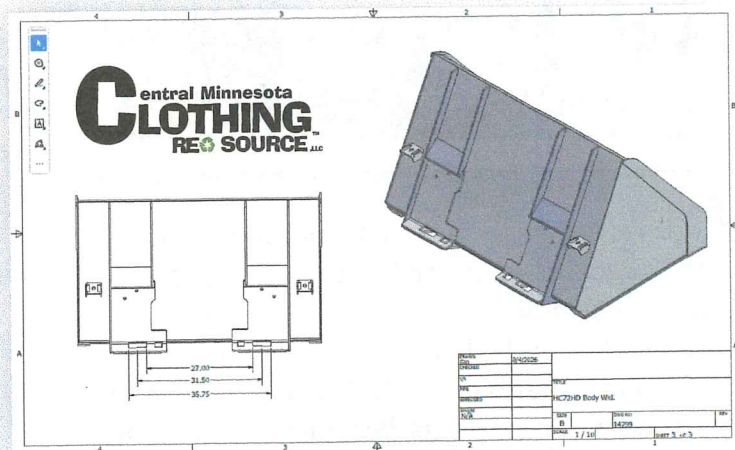
Putting your Store on the Map!

Clearly, I am not just talking about Google maps. I assume you have already done that. (If not, be sure to register your store's location, hours and website with the popular web browsers today. This is how so many new customers will find your store.)

Rather, let's discuss how you can differentiate your store from other thrift options in your community so that have a unique "draw" that compels people to visit. Every once in a while you will see very creative managers mount a plane on top of their building, put dancing cows in their front yard or post loud, big banners over the front door that say "Thrift! We're Open!" Every crazy idea imaginable has been done and stores do increase traffic when they get the public's attention. Even more compelling, however, is leveraging a specific product line that is uniquely abundant to your store and that can makes it stand apart in a competitive market.

At Barkers More 4 Less, we purchased large amounts of antiques cheaply from collectors who were downsizing, and created an antique room with beautiful product displays that would rival any antique store. Customers spent hours browsing our antiques before ever going into the rest of the store. It brought antique lovers in from miles away.

Product selections that I have seen made "oversized" at thrift stores include massive selections of jewelry, electronics, shoes, toys, books, furniture, brand new items, Christmas all year and more! There are people with very specific interests who will go out of their way to shop at your store because of your oversized selection of their favorite stuff. They will buy other things as well. So identify your abundance, set aside space to go big and do it right, and watch the people come in!



Inventory Rotation - One Key to Success

In the world of thrift, we all seem to agree that rotating inventory as frequently as possible is essential to the vitality and health of a store. It enhances the quality of our customer's experience which is paramount to our success. Frequent rotation leads to a fun, new selection of product which increases your average sale and creates more frequent visits. Some stores actually leverage the rotation chore, doing a complete store turnover up to twice a year. They will promote the "ALL-NEW Product Event" in advance, and shoppers will come in droves. Sales often hit record highs when everything is new on the shelves, but preparing this event is a huge task.

Rotation as a daily strategy has proven itself time and time again. Thrift store chains place significant focus on frequent rotation. Unfortunately, many small thrift stores do NOT, according to their own admission and their customers complaints. Why? First, the benefit-to-reward ratio isn't always easy to recognize. Labor costs are historically high, and frequent rotation adds labor. (How much depends upon your rotation strategy.) The reward in terms of a higher average sale is not always seen quickly, but the increase to payroll is. Secondly, many times the labor simply isn't there. Thrift stores are notorious for burning through non-mission-driven staff because there is always more work to do than what can be done and this creates stress. Lastly, not all stores have access to volunteer labor. Tagging and tracking old product, pulling it from the shelves and replacing it with fresh new items is time consuming.

Yet national thrift store chains realize that at any given day, 30% of their product may have little to no appeal to their customers because it's outdated, niche-specific, in poor condition, priced improperly or has hidden defects. If these unsold items are not removed regularly, either by discounts, color tag sales, liquidations or staff pulls, they grow over time as a percentage of your total on-shelf inventory until your fresh, new product disappears in a sea of clutter. So

how do we fix this?

A store wide focus on rotation starts by communicating to staff that anything not sold in a given



period of time is subject to discount or rotation. Customer feedback can help you decide which you use. Setting up a discount schedule for aged inventory and a systematic rotation using a color tag system is a great idea. (If you use a POS system, most software will keep track of this for you.) Make inventory rotation using your chosen system a daily procedure, just like production, and explain why it is as important to sales as new production. Decide on a strategy. Discounting aged items increases customer excitement and reduces the need for labor, but it can cannibalize sales of new items that have higher price points. Rotating product without passing it through a discount program immediately declutters the store, putting focus back on your new product, but you lose the sale you might have made to price-sensitive customers who only shop "on clearance". You know who they are!

The decision is complex and the best solution may not be one or the other, but a mix of both. The important take away in this discussion is not necessarily how you rotate inventory, but that you do it regularly and by means of an easy and established system that staff can follow daily.

We are thankful for YOU!

Your collaboration in this collective vision to improve our planet and our communities through resale and recycling is essential" business! Thrift stores are the first stop on a long recycling road for millions of pounds of items that would otherwise go straight to a landfill, poisoning our ground and our future. This is a profound accomplishment!

Sometimes it's the little things that your staff do that



just makes our day. Our drivers love their jobs not because of their sore backs, the snowstorms or the grueling heat, but because of how well they are treated. You show us your appreciation every day, with candy, cookies (thank you Mary in Hastings!) and compliments, and oftentimes a helping hand to load. These are things we do not expect, but that make our difficult job so much more enjoyable. We are particularly inspired by the enthusiasm of managers to prepare materials in a way that we can best receive them. You care about us, and that means a lot! So in case my message hasn't been clear, we appreciate YOU!

Thank you and Happy Thanksgiving!

Rivertown Treasures continued from p.1

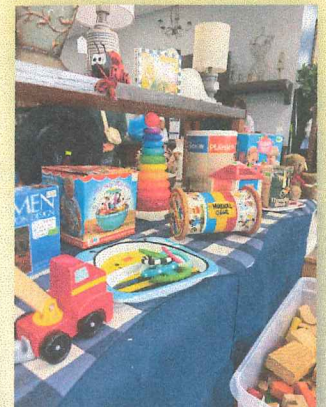
Rivertown Treasures has a limited amount of sorting and storage space and our community provides such great donations that we have to get creative to accommodate all the goodness! (We do not take furniture or large items.) We have added more volunteers to sort and keep up with daily processes, and we communicate with CMCR when there will be extra-large pickups. Our donation center is open Monday through Friday and sometimes on Saturday, so we get a lot!

Our revenue has grown as we focus more on moving and rotating merchandise than trying to seek every dollar out of each item. We use a colored tag system to rotate items on and off the floor. Rivertown Treasures has also implemented specialty sales throughout the year in a room attached to the store.

We create special product offerings in this room for Halloween decor in October, winter coats and boots in November and Christmas items in December and July. We promote our area's prom events as well with dresses and formalwear in the spring. This allows us to put more merchandise in the main areas of the store while also promoting and moving a large amount of seasonal merchandise.



Donna
Sorting Books



Ideas for Halloween Window Displays!

