



# a Beneficial eXchange

■ Buffalo Exchange offers students on a budget decent clothes at decent prices

By Mason West  
Oregon Daily Emerald

The stereotypical college student is always short on cash. This makes thrift shopping a must, but looking through an entire store to find the right clothes can be time consuming.

The creators of the Buffalo Exchange, a new-and-used-clothing store, were frustrated with spending their time in thrift stores and sometimes not even finding decent clothes. The Exchange was founded in 1974 in Tucson, Ariz., by Kerstin and Spencer Block with the mission to provide people quality and stylish used clothes. Since then, the Exchange has added 20 other locations throughout eight states.

Mary Kolego, manager of the Eugene store at 131 E. 5th Ave., actually worked at the first store. She said

the Buffalo Exchange was the first store to give people cash from their clothes the moment they are traded in. The Eugene store will give people 35 percent of what they will sell an item for in cash, or 50 percent in trade. For example, if an item was sold for \$10, the original seller would get \$3.50 in cash or \$5 for trade.

Every employee of the Buffalo Exchange is authorized to buy clothes from customers. Associate Manager Jacob Buerk said the individual choice gives each store a different flavor.

"Since Eugene is such a diverse town, we try and buy for a diverse clientele," Buerk said.

But the Buffalo Exchange won't buy everything. It is strict about clothes being clean, in good condition, in season and in style.

"It's a step up from Goodwill and St. Vincent DePaul because we do all the weeding through for the customers," Buerk said.

Customer Michelle Holman knows this about the Buffalo Exchange, which helps her avoid buying new clothes. But her

choice to avoid consumerism doesn't mean she has infinite patience.

"I don't go to Goodwill because I don't have the commitment to go through each item," she said.

Although this makes the Buffalo Exchange a reliable source of quality, customers wishing to sell clothes may not get rid of everything. But the store allows people to leave anything that isn't bought to be picked up by St. Vincent DePaul or First Place Family shelter.

This isn't the only act of charity that the Buffalo Exchange does. If customers choose not to take a bag with their purchases, they will receive a token that represents 5 cents to one

of three local charities chosen by the store. The charities rotate, but Kolego has her own philosophy.

"We try and have a human-related one, an animal-related one and an environmentally related one," she said.

Kolego said that the owners of the company are much more socially minded than most businesses, perhaps one of the reasons that the Buffalo Exchange isn't a name as big as some other stores.

Buerk said the store doesn't spend much money on advertising, relying more on word of mouth. And after a little rough start just a year and a half ago in Eugene, he believes the Buffalo Exchange is really starting to come into its own.

## More thrifty options

Thrift shopping in Eugene is not limited to Buffalo Exchange. Second-hand clothing can be purchased at the following charities:

**Goodwill Industries** is a non-profit organization that strives to provide opportunities for people with disabilities or other disadvantages to become a part of the workforce. The retail stores serve both places where such people can be employed and as centers to raise funds for other programs.

Local stores are at: 15 Coburg Rd.; 1015 River Rd.; 855 Seneca Rd.; 1590 Willamette St.; and 30th and Main streets, Springfield.

**St. Vincent DePaul** is geared toward helping the needy. It uses revenues from store sales to help fund other programs such as employment training and low income housing options.

Local stores are located at: 2345 W. Broadway; 1880 W. 11th Ave.; 110 E. 11th Ave.; and 501 Main St., Springfield.

**The Salvation Army** is a non-profit Christian international movement. It provides food, clothing, financial support and other miscellaneous assistance to individuals in need.

The Eugene store is located at 2265 W. 7th Ave.

**Other local thrift stores include, but are not limited to:**

Puttin' on the Ritz (vintage clothing), 350 E. 11th Ave.

Rags to Riches, 360 E. 11th Ave.

Junior League of Eugene, 2839 Willamette St.

Out of Storage, 2290 Main St., Springfield

Value Village, 555 W. Centennial Blvd., Springfield



Bridget Herbers, a buyer for Buffalo Exchange, accepts just about everything with style and in good condition.