

Story By DAN HAAG

Spring clean

out with the old while doing some good

Spring is supposed to be about rebirth and renewal. What better place to embrace that notion than with your garage or attic? Renew that space, and clean it out.

The problem is, you don't realize how much stuff you accumulate over the years.

We eagerly pull out boxes and bags from storage and instantly feel a little overwhelmed. Inevitably, we shove it all back to its darkened recesses and wash our hands of the whole effort. "Maybe next year," is our annual mantra.

Admitting we need help is supposedly a sign of maturity, so when spring rears its demanding head, take a different tack: Donate locally.

The North Coast is brimming with charitable organizations that need and want your stuff and will happily accept it without complaint or judgment.

Helping others start over

Deja Vu Thrift Store & Boutique in downtown Astoria brims with high-end clothing, shoes, handbags, jewelry and furniture.

Well-loved by the community, Deja Vu has been voted Best Thrift Store in Coast Weekend's annual Readers' Choice Awards for nine years straight — as long as the contest has been going on.

"We have a lot of regulars, locally and from out of town," says Willow Creel, Deja Vu's manager.

But the store is at the forefront of a much more vital endeavor; all of its revenue directly supports The Harbor, a community agency that



PHOTO BY JOSHUA BESSEX

Deja Vu Thrift Store in downtown Astoria sells clothes and other items.

provides intervention, recovery and support to survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault and stalking.

Deja Vu consists of an upstairs retail section that is open to the general public and a downstairs voucher room specifically designed to assist domestic abuse survivors. "The downstairs has items like pots, pans and bedding," Creel says. "Things that help survivors get out of a bad situation and start over."

Creel says the store generally needs "everything," but there are several items usually in high demand and short supply. "We al-

ways need nice furniture and clothing," she says. "Plus-size clothing is especially hard to come by."

While women's and baby clothing is abundant, casual men's clothing and children's clothing for ages 5 to 14 are scarcer and in demand.

Creel cautions that there are a few items Deja Vu can't accept. That includes mattresses, infant car seats, and baby strollers, items that are difficult to clean.

She adds that electronics such as computers and televisions that aren't flat screen can be taken to the dump for no charge.

While the store can always use items, Creel is grateful for the constant support it receives from the community.

She adds that nearly everyone who shops or donates understands that they are doing their part to create a safer environment for others in need. "Our shoppers are very aware of what we do here," she says.



PHOTO BY JOSHUA BESSEX

Men's jeans are on display at Deja Vu.

Embracing potential

Coast Rehabilitation Services helps individuals embrace their potential. A private nonprofit organization that supports more than 120 individuals with developmental disabilities in Clatsop and Multnomah Counties in Oregon and Pacific County in Washington, CRS prepares people to celebrate themselves as individuals, community members and citizens.

That includes the CRS Thrift Store on Seventh Street in Astoria, which does double duty as a retail center for the general public and a training ground for 13 employees.

Darin Hocking, manager of the thrift store, says the skills learned on the job by his employees aid in getting them into the community. "They do all the work here," he says. "Everything from tagging and sorting items to helping customers and working the register."

Hocking says the Christmas season and spring are generally the busiest for donations,

THE DECISION TO THROW AWAY OLD ITEMS RATHER THAN DONATING THEM FOR RESALE BOILS DOWN TO SUSTAINABILITY: DOES THIS ITEM BEST SERVE MY COMMUNITY IN A LANDFILL OR AT A THRIFT STORE?