

Organization through donation

Donations help sustain employment programs

By Jolene Guzman
The Itemizer-Observer

DALLAS — While last week it was last-minute purchases, this week it was down-to-the-wire donations that kept Dallas' Goodwill busy.

Monday saw a steady stream of cars lining up at the stores donation center, dropping off clothing, furniture, electronics and books. That flow will probably peak on New Year's Eve — Dec. 31, 2014, saw 250 donations — as people want to sneak in another tax deduction on their 2015 form.

"I think it's important for people to be able to take that deduction for their generosity," said Adina Shewfelt, the Dallas Goodwill manager.

For others, in addition to seeing a small tax benefit, it was the beginning of "out with the old and in with the new."



Dallas resident Kevin Moen drops off donations at Goodwill on Monday.

If organizing your house is on your to-do list for 2016, making donations to area thrift stores has the double benefit of helping clear the clutter and assisting others in the community through

employment and job skills programs.

"We give all the time," said Dallas resident Kevin Moen as he dropped off a few boxes of donations Monday morning. "It's local,

and we appreciate helping out when and where we can."

He also noted that it is good to part ways with some possessions after receiving gifts at Christmastime.

Shewfelt said the store sees a lot of that.

"Then sometimes it's about cleaning out at the end of the year," she said after one car drove away. "They didn't even want a receipt, but they came in at the end of the year."

The items people drop off at the store don't spend a lot of time hiding in a back room after they are donated. Goodwill has a system of sorting and pricing that has sales floor-worthy items ready for customers within hours.

"They've timed it," Shewfelt said. "They've found it takes about six hours."

Items spend about four to five weeks on the sales floor, and if they don't find a new home, they go to salvagers or are recycled.

Of the 197 million pounds of donations taken in at Goodwill stores in the Columbia Willamette region (Central and Northwest Ore-

gon and Southwest Washington) in 2014, about 89 percent was sold, recycled or salvaged.

Clothing is by far the most donated item, but the second most-item may be a surprise: electronics.

Many people will use Goodwill's e-cycling program, which takes all devices, working or not.

"I'm just getting rid of unusable electronics," said Rose Bajorins, while handing off a couple boxes to store employees.

She said she has an unfortunately large supply of obsolete electronics and took advantage of a chance to unload a few on Monday.

By that time, there were several people waiting to give their unneeded items a new life. Dallas store employees expect that will be the case until 2016.

"They haven't been lining up yet," Shewfelt said. "This is the first day I've seen them lining up."

Tips for getting organized

Not sure how to attack the clutter monster in your house? Here's a few tips to restore order.

1. Start somewhere. Don't get overwhelmed with the size of the decluttering/organization project; break it up into manageable pieces. Pick an overpopulated shelf, junk drawer, or messy counter as a starting place.

Another good idea: organize something that seems to be a daily headache. Is your closet a bottomless pit? Does your cat make a bed of the clothes you had set aside in the bottom of the closet to donate later? That's where you should start.

2. A successful decluttering effort takes time and dedication, but you don't have to rearrange your life to do it. Making time for 15 minutes each day is a good start. Throw in a one- to two-hour session once or twice a week and you will start seeing results.

3. Struggle deciding what do you keep and what do you throw away? Take four boxes and label them: Put Away; Give Away/Sell; Storage; and Recycle/Throw Away. Put items in boxes accordingly. This method forces you to overcome indecision, which can be the source of junk accumulation.

4. Another method is clearing clutter from living areas in boxes or bags and storing it to be dealt with later. The results are immediate: clutter-free living areas.

5. Find "homes" for everyday objects, keys, backpacks, briefcases and purses, mail awaiting sorting or recycling and important paperwork.

Life creates clutter, so if it must exist, give it boundaries. A kitchen junk drawer can hide chaos within. Don't have time to hang up or fold your clothes properly? Throw them in one corner or one piece of furniture in your bedroom and nowhere else.

6. Establish good habits and routines. For example, returning home (put your keys, coat and bags in the same place each time) or mail sorting (throw away junk immediately, put bills in their proper place).

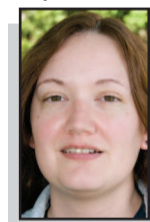
7. Finally, want to do some extreme decluttering? Try the one in, one out rule, meaning for everything you bring home, a similar item has to go. It's a shirt for a shirt or pair of shoes for a pair shoes. Perhaps not for the sentimentalist, but still an effective strategy. Also, it could prevent those impulse buys.

Source: <http://organizedhome.com/>.

Mission accomplished (almost)

I can't remember having willingly put myself in such physical pain for so long as I did on Nov. 8, 2015.

If joints, muscles and lungs could scream, they would have been howling.



JOLENE GUZMAN
Commentary

but a steep, hilly, muddy, slippery trail run at Silver Falls State Park. It's safe to say the course is daunting.

And just for fun, there's a short but steep hill with less than a mile to go. I was hating the climb, but looking forward to the downhill side to make up time. Well, the descent was a slick mess that required treading with care — or better yet, skies.

So much for making up time, but at the bottom, there was maybe a quarter of a mile of green grass and a bridge between me and the finish line.

I picked up my aching knees and took it home. New Year's resolution met.

Almost.

At the beginning of the year, along with the usual goals of reading more and hoarding less (those didn't work, by the way), I gave myself a specific goal: run 10 races.

I trained and signed up for several local runs of varying distances from 3K to 10K.

OK, so "several" is not 10, but after an exchange in the *I-O* newsroom last spring, I allowed my goal to shift.

As usual when it comes to news staff challenges, it was reporter Emily Mentzer who suggested it. Already a half-marathon finisher, she wanted to take on the course at Silver Falls. She asked if I wanted to join her.

I only took a few seconds to think about before saying "yes."

In hindsight, I think that was the motivation I was looking for to take on a "go big or go home" challenge.

From that point on, the rest of my races were training milestones. I became a regular on the perimeter trail at Bush Park in Salem, running an increasing number of miles as one season drifted into another.

Still in the back of my mind I thought, can I really do this?

On a warm night in mid-October, I found my answer after running my longest training run of 10.5 miles. It felt good, like I could run longer.

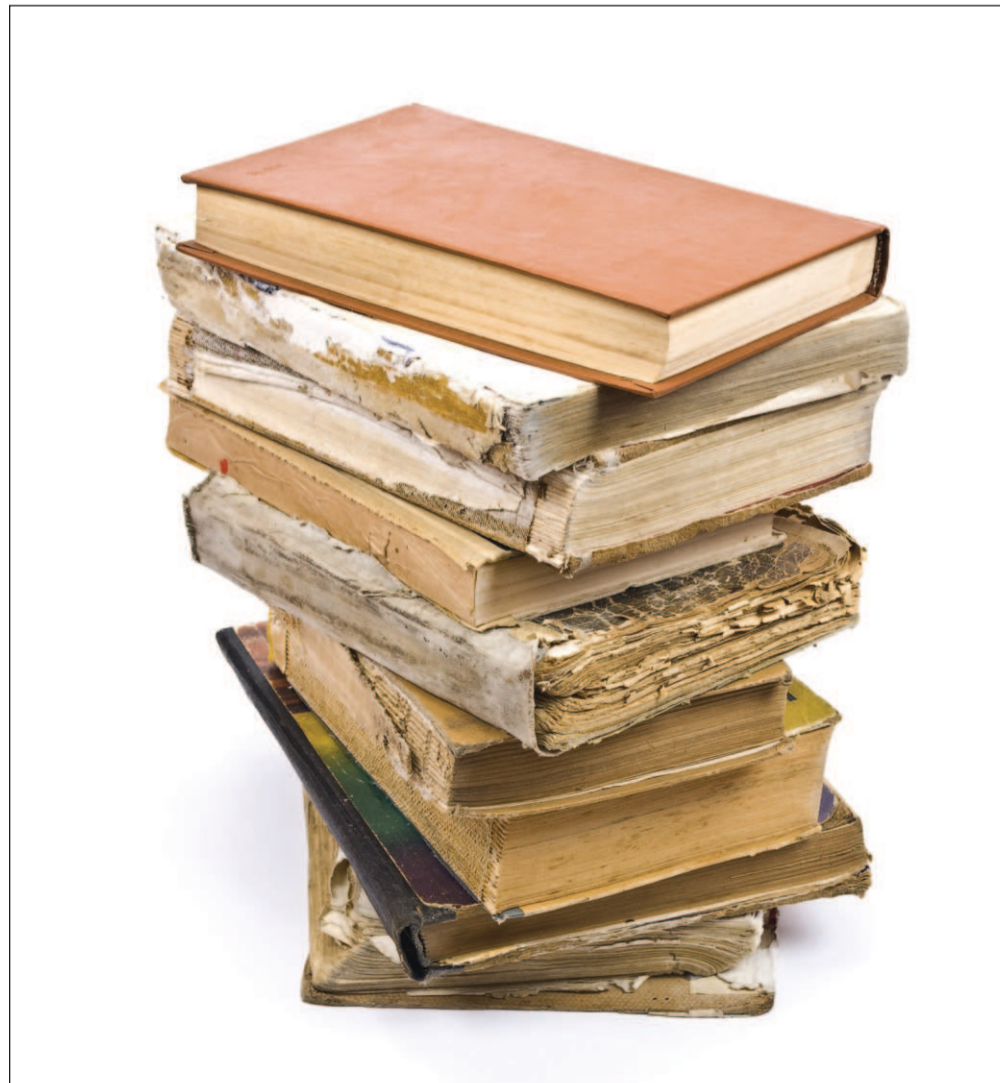
It turns out 10.5 miles wasn't quite enough to prepare me for this course, thus the mile 11 joint, muscle and lung "collapse."

But at that point, after months of training — miles of running in the heat, cold, rain and at times when I should have been doing something else — quitting was not an option.

I didn't.

Instead, I turned doubt into an accomplishment that I will be proud of the rest of my life.

As for those 10 races, there's always 2016. P.S. Emily and I beat our time goals, despite the elevation and crazy steep hills at Silver Falls. We are going to do it again in 2016. This time Sports Editor Lukas Eggen should join us (yes, that is a challenge).



Jolene Guzman, left, and Emily Mentzer were all smiles at the Silver Falls Half-Marathon.

JEFF MENTZER/for the Itemizer-Observer