



## BETHESDAMAGAZINE.COM | MARCH/APRIL 2018 89

## TOO MUCH STUFF



**A**fter living in the same Bethesda home for the past 50 years, Carol Bowis had an overwhelming feeling that many people experience these days. She had too much stuff.

Bowis used to own One Step Up, a consignment store for crafters in Bethesda. Now she's putting that retail know-how to good use as she looks to downsize. Last fall she started renting space in **Kensington's Antique Row** to sell her furniture, art and housewares.

"It's given me a lot of joy," she says about her stall. "The things I've sold are totally useful. They've got a brand-new home, and someone will appreciate them."

We're drowning in stuff, and the burden of overloaded closets, basements, attics and offices is overwhelming and exhausting us. While baby boomers are downsizing—moving out of large houses and into condos, small ranch homes or senior living apartments—millennials are driving the green movement to reuse and recycle.

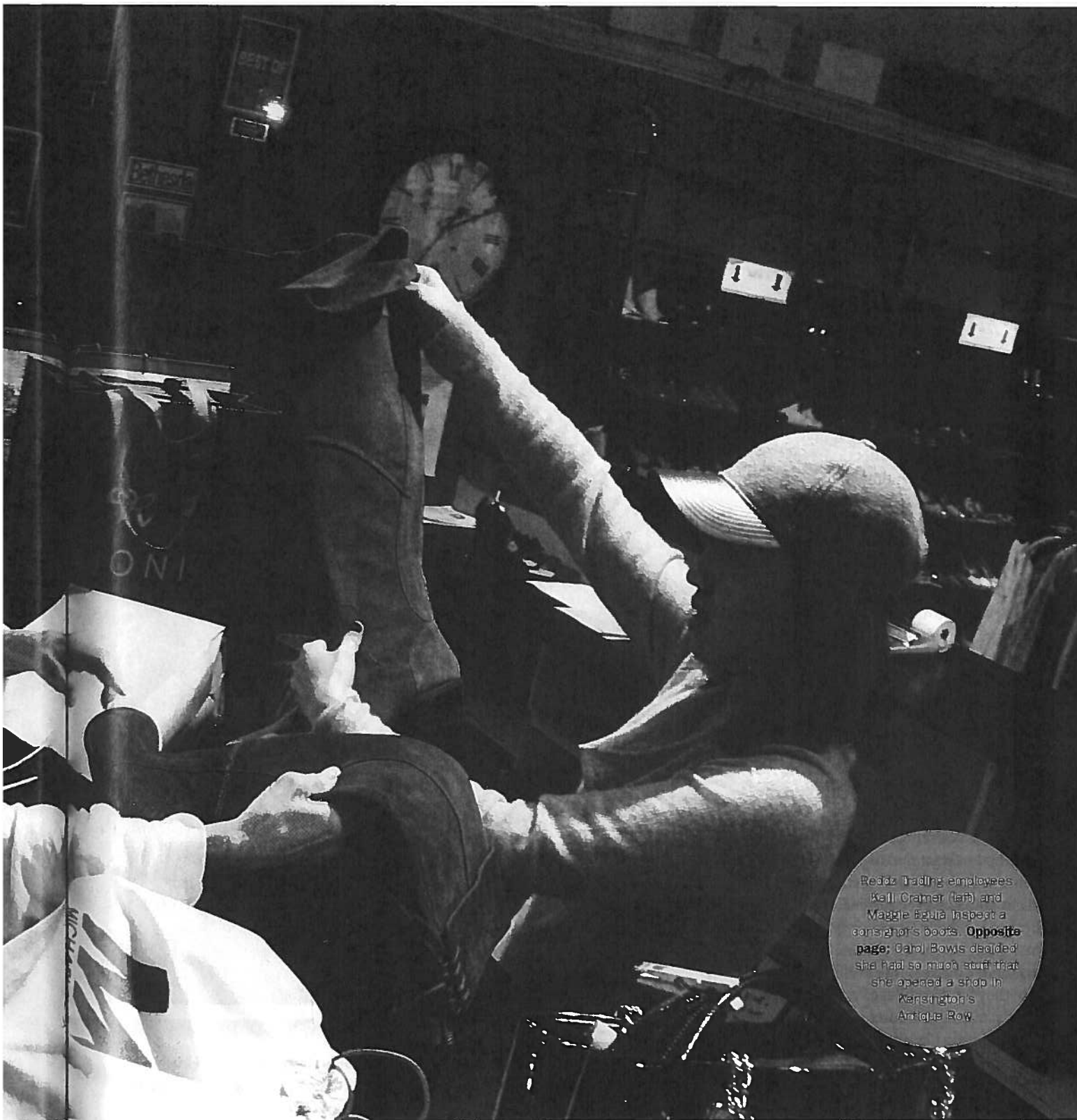
We've assembled a handy guide to getting rid of furniture, clothes, sports equipment, books, toys, bikes, medical equipment and office supplies—and to discovering deals and treasures that were once someone else's beloved possessions.



**THERE'S SO MUCH SECONDHAND** merchandise and interest in donating that several new franchised thrift and consignment stores have spread throughout the country. Many of these clothing and furniture boutiques look a lot like stores selling new goods. The stigma about buying someone else's stuff has nearly vanished, with shoppers happily sharing their finds on Instagram with haul videos and photos.

BOWIS PHOTO BY STEPHEN WALKER

REDD PHOTO BY SARAH HOGUE



Reddz Trading employees Kelli Ormer (left) and Maggie Egula inspect a consignor's boots. **Opposite page:** Carol Bowis decided she had so much stuff that she opened a shop in Kensington's Antique Row.

"Thrifting allows you to buy up," says former *Washington Post* reporter Annie Groer, who was raised in Silver Spring and makes regular runs to **Unique Thrift** on Veirs Mill Road. She once spent 60 cents on a teal sheath and jacket she wore to the White House Correspondents' Dinner. "All the best stuff I own comes from resale," she says.

The locals who run consignment shops and thrift

stores, and who work for charities that accept donations of clothes, books and furniture, are experiencing boom times. They're handling an avalanche of high-quality merchandise from our affluent and generous neighbors. Many clothing items still have original sales tags. Younger consumers are discovering resale shops, attracted by the famous clothing labels they can't afford to buy new. For many, secondhand no longer means second best.



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It's a golden time to be a resale buyer—but not so much for downsizers trying to sell or consign their things. The overload of available merchandise is causing consignment shops to be extra picky, causing hurt feelings when beloved items get rejected. There's also a mismatch between buyers and sellers. "There's no resale value for so much of our parents' stuff," says organizer Cindy Szparaga of **Orchestrated Moves** in Bethesda. "No one wants the teacup collections, the china, crystal, needlepoint chairs and Oriental rugs. This generation doesn't want to be tied down with big brown furniture."

The glut of excess stuff is so large locally that there can be two-week waits for appointments to sell clothes to consignment shops, and four-week waits for some charity trucks to visit houses and haul away furniture. Catherine Meloy, CEO of **Goodwill of Greater Washington**, says its stores are now inundated with furniture. Local consignment stores are turning away items due to a lack of space. Estate sale companies are declining to take on new households.

"We had to start making appointments because every August we'd get killed by every girl who went to Bethesda-Chevy Chase or Walter Johnson [high schools] coming in with laundry baskets [of clothing] before they left for college," says Derek Kennedy, owner of **Remix Recycling Co.** in Bethesda (formerly Mustard Seed). He's been in the clothing consignment business since 1991 and has never seen so much merchandise come to his store. He schedules 20 appointments daily and could easily fill 10 more slots. "We're a disposable society. People come in to sell so they can buy more."

Warren Wigutow of **Second Story Books** in Rockville visits up to three area homes daily to determine the value of private book collections. He regularly sees hoarding situations. "I've

seen places where a person bought every book on one subject, let's say railroads, with many, many thousands of books filling rooms, closets and kitchen cabinets. Or someone hit every library sale, every flea market and has stacks of books piled in every conceivable place."

**HELPING THIS MIGRATION** of goods are entirely new industries that assist people with getting rid of clutter. Nationwide companies, like

**Address Our Mess**, help with clutter and hoarding, offering "no judgment" employees and plain trucks that don't announce their purpose. Professional organizers, working in small firms or through TaskRabbit or Craigslist, are prospering in Montgomery County.

Betsy Fein, president of **Clutterbusters!!**, a Rockville organizing firm, has a team of 12 professional organizers that has been tackling home and office messes since 2002. Its more recent sister company



SLOANS & KENYON PHOTO BY SKIP BROWN

CLUTTERBUSTERS!! PHOTO BY STEPHEN WALKER

is called **Hoarderbusters**. "Some people drink. Some people eat. Others become hoarders," Fein says. "There are definitely shopping addicts with brand-new things stuffed in closets, but stacks of paper are the biggest issue. We get calls to sort files in garages so that people can park their cars inside for the winter."

Recycling haulers, such as **Donation Nation** in Gaithersburg, are a new form of movers and are paid by customers to remove and responsibly

redistribute unwanted items.

For those with valuable items, there are auction houses. "We are high-end recycling," says Stephanie Kenyon, president of **Sloans & Kenyon Auctioneers and Appraisers**, which operates in-person auctions on the ground floor of its Bethesda store and an extensive second-floor Consignment Gallery for items \$300 and under.

The internet also can be a lifeline. Online resellers of clothes, shoes,

handbags and accessories, such as **ThredUp** or **Current Boutique**, will send you clean-out bags. Just fill with your folded unwanted items, seal the bag and the post office will pick it up for free. You also can photograph your nicer castoffs and sell them instantly on websites such as **Poshmark** and the **RealReal**.

Declutterers love **eBay**, where you can easily upload photos and descriptions of your treasures. If that's too much trouble, take your items to an eBay drop-off location, such as **iSoldIt** in Gaithersburg. It researches, photographs and sells your items on eBay, Craigslist, Amazon.com or OfferUp for a fee. Newer yet are Facebook Marketplace and Nextdoor, which unlike eBay or Amazon, do not take a percentage of sales.

If you prefer to donate to non-profits, be wary about putting items in some of the metal boxes found in area parking lots. Many of those donation boxes are run by for-profit groups that rent charities' names and give as little as 20 percent of their proceeds back to the charities.

You'll be a happier donor if you consult a store's website to get specifics on what can and cannot be donated. Most of the clothing stores list specific brands they're seeking. Appointments are required in some cases. Here's where you can start. >>

**Left:** The second-floor Consignment Gallery at Sloans & Kenyon in Bethesda has items \$300 and under; **right:** Betsy Fein (left) and Julie Carringer of ClutterbustersII organize a client's Rockville garage.





# STUFF

## CLOTHING

### WHERE TO SELL

#### >> THE BARGAIN BOX

A project of Christ Episcopal Church since 1957, this shop accepts items for consignment and sells clothes, jewelry and other items in its thrift shop. Proceeds help more than 17 community nonprofits and clients in its free clothing program. Clients can shop for up to five items every other month.

398 Hungerford Drive, Rockville; 301-762-2242; [christchurchrockville.org/bargain-box](http://christchurchrockville.org/bargain-box)

#### >> CURRENT BOUTIQUE

This 10-year-old national chain, with a store in Bethesda, emphasizes contemporary fashion. No appointment is needed for in-store drop-off. If you have more than 50 top-quality items (Louis Vuitton, Gucci, Chanel), there is home pickup. There's also a mail-in service with prepaid shipping. Consignors earn 50 percent of the sale price.

7220 Wisconsin Ave., Bethesda; 301-222-1114; [currentboutique.com](http://currentboutique.com)

#### >> I DO I DO

Consignments of wedding gowns by appointment only. Pristine condition is required, and gowns usually must be less than 2 years old. No bridesmaid dresses. Accessories and flower girl items should be less than 5 years old, with a recent dry cleaning receipt. Consignors receive 50 percent of the set price.

15932 Luanne Drive, Gaithersburg; 240-243-0050; [idoioweddinggowns.com](http://idoioweddinggowns.com)

#### >> REDDZ TRADING

Pristine women's clothing, designer handbags, shoes and accessories, with some menswear. Cash is paid directly; no appointment needed. Clothes are marked down continuously, even to 1 cent. Top brands include Manolo Blahnik, Tory Burch, Eileen Fisher, Kate Spade and Chanel. Consignors receive 30 percent of the price the store plans to sell it for—on the spot—or 45 percent of that price in store credit.

7801 Woodmont Ave., Bethesda; 301-656-7333; [reddztrading.com](http://reddztrading.com)

#### >> REMIX RECYCLING CO.

Formerly Mustard Seed, men's and women's clothing consignment. Appointments are

required and usually should be made at least two weeks in advance. Consignors receive 45 percent of the selling price up front, or 65 percent in store credit. Popular brands are Ann Taylor, J.Crew, Banana Republic and Lululemon, and the store prefers folded clothes, not brought in on hangers.

7349 Wisconsin Ave., Bethesda; 301-907-4699; [remixbethesda.com](http://remixbethesda.com)

#### >> RITA G'S CHAPTER TWO BOUTIQUE

Very high-end clothing, designer handbags and accessories with prices to match. Still, you pay a fraction of these top labels' original prices, and the inventory is in immaculate condition. There are some lower-priced scarves and

jewelry in this second-floor store. Consignors of very costly items receive 60 percent of sale prices; 50 percent for all other items. The consignment period is three months, with prices dropping 20 percent the second month and 40 percent the third.

4931 Cordell Ave., Bethesda; 301-718-7200; [ritagfineconsign.com](http://ritagfineconsign.com)

#### >> SUNFLOWERS CONSIGNMENT BOUTIQUE

This small shop features clothes, jewelry, handbags and accessories with an emphasis on well-known labels. Consignors receive 40 percent; call for appointment first. Appointments start in August for fall/



At Bethesda's  
Remix Recycling Co.,  
appointments should  
be made about  
two weeks  
in advance.



winter, and February for spring/summer clothes. Stock is discounted the longer it stays on the racks. Also sells some new items, such as sunglasses and watches.

10307 Kensington Parkway, Kensington;  
301-946-6721; facebook.com/sunflowers-consignment-boutique-324978463997

#### >> UPTOWN CHEAPSKATE

Part of a 41-store chain of consignment retailers aimed at younger customers. Items should be freshly laundered, not on hangers, and can be for all seasons. High-demand brands include Michael Kors, Lululemon, Under Armour, Kate Spade and J.Crew. Sellers receive 25 percent of

an item's in-store price and get 25 percent more if they opt for in-store credit.

1038 Rockville Pike, Rockville;  
301-762-1089; uptowncheapskate.com/  
local-thrift-stores/maryland/rockville

#### >> WALK IN VINTAGE

True vintage dresses, jewelry, hats, handbags and lingerie at this 2-year-old shop run by Slavena Minshew on Antique Row. Begun in 2011 as an online store, this purveyor of a fun assortment of vintage items accepts consignments for clothes and accessories.

3758 Howard Ave., Kensington;  
301-624-3198; walkinvintage.com

## WHERE TO DONATE

There are dozens of charities in Montgomery County that accept donations of clothes, furniture, books, equipment and other specialized items, including cellphones. To find a complete list, visit [montgomerycountymd.gov/volunteercenter](http://montgomerycountymd.gov/volunteercenter).

#### >> BETHESDA CARES

Clothing (especially men's and in larger sizes), socks and other items are welcome at this service organization, which helps the homeless. Because of storage issues, it appreciates seasonally appropriate clothing.

7728 Woodmont Ave., Bethesda;  
301-907-9244; [bethesdacares.org](http://bethesdacares.org)

#### >> GOODWILL RETAIL STORE & DONATION CENTER

Accepts gently used clothes, lamps, housewares, working electronics, furniture, bed linens, toys, books, CDs and more to support its job training and education missions. An online guide helps donors value their items for tax purposes. It offers scheduled home pickups, including 48-hour priority pickup for a fee.

4816 Bolling Brook Parkway, Rockville;  
301-881-0744  
619 S. Frederick Ave., Gaithersburg;  
301-527-0970; [dcgoodwill.org](http://dcgoodwill.org)

#### >> INTERFAITH WORKS CLOTHING CENTER

Accepts adult and children's clothing and shoes, as well as household items, books, CDs, toiletries, electronics and toys. Drop-off is easy at a dedicated loading dock—look for the center's sign. A buzzer alerts staff, who will give you a tax receipt. The items are sorted and hung in a cheery and newly renovated space for clients who can shop once a month for free. Only clients who meet low-income standards may shop here.

751 Twinbrook Parkway, Rockville;  
301-424-3796; [iworksmc.org/interfaith-works-clothing-center](http://iworksmc.org/interfaith-works-clothing-center)

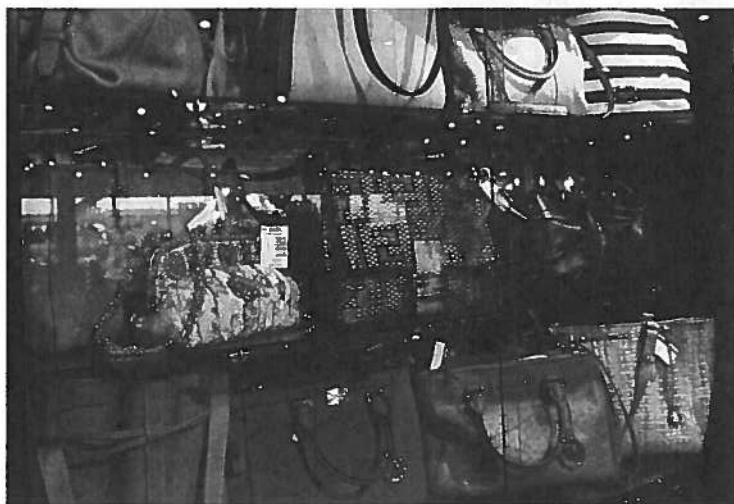
#### >> PENNYWORTH THRIFT SHOP

Clothing, household goods, toys, jewelry, artwork, small furniture and books are accepted at this 60-year-old thrift store that supports the ministries of Grace Episcopal Church, including its homeless ministry, and several local nonprofits, such as Montgomery Hospice and Shepherd's Table/Progress Place in Silver Spring.

949 Bonifant St., Silver Spring;  
301-587-6242

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## CONSIGNING TIPS



### *How to be an effective clothes consignor*

- » Bring items for the upcoming season. Shops are too small to store anything but the season they're selling. After the Fourth of July, for example, most stores start buying for fall.
- » Check the store's website for brands they want. Many shops only feature top brands.
- » Call for an appointment and ask if they have an item limit.
- » Launder or dry-clean every item, and make sure they have no rips or stains.
- » Remember that clothes usually must be no more than 2 years old. Exceptions are made for handbags, vintage clothing or a top brand.
- » Understand that consigned garments are usually priced at one-third of the original retail price—and you typically get half of that price when it sells.
- » Know your contract end date—which is usually 60 to 90 days—and if you must pick up clothes if they haven't sold. Most shops donate merchandise to charities after 90 days.
- » Don't haggle. Owners hate it, and they hold the power. If you don't like the price offered, don't consign there and try another store.
- » Handbags, shoes and accessories usually are more valued than clothes. Shirts, sweaters, blazers and dresses sell more rapidly than pants. Customers don't want to take the time to try on pants.
- » Try to bring in at least 10 items to make your appointment worthwhile. Setting aside time for a consignor with just two or three items is not efficient for store owners.

### *How to sell your household goods*

- » Bring in top brands that were made by hand, including old handmade rugs, Asian screens and well-built sofas, even those that are decades old. Avoid mass-produced glued furniture.
- » Research your treasures. Many designers who create valuable furniture, chandeliers and mirrors are unknown to the general public.
- » Don't even bother with fussy grandmother furniture or carved Victorian pieces. There's little market now for heavy wood furniture, no matter its condition or artistry.
- » Remember that midcentury modern and smaller-size living room and dining room furniture are prized. Most furniture buyers are under 40 and living in smaller condos and apartments.
- » Forget trying to sell massive entertainment systems or hutches built for non-flat-screen TVs. In most cases, they can't even be donated.
- » Know that shop owners are looking for pristine finishes and clean upholstery. If your items need even slight repair, consignment is not in their future.
- » Take a flattering photo of your item and email it to shops. Most require appointments and pre-approval of goods.

**“The best consignors are those bringing in things they or their girlfriends would wear. Everything has to be in top condition and contemporary.”**

—Lindsay Petak, manager of Reddz Trading in Bethesda



# STUFF

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## WHERE TO DONATE

### >> THE SALVATION ARMY FAMILY STORE

Well-organized offerings of secondhand clothes, household items and furniture. Proceeds further its global mission of helping in disasters, assisting the jobless and hungry, and combating addiction.

1590 Rockville Pike, Rockville;  
301-881-1060;  
salvationarmydcareastores.org

### >> UNIQUE HILLENDALE/VALUE VILLAGE

A for-profit chain that's part of the Unique/Savers brand, with 350 stores in the U.S., Canada and Australia. The stores buy goods from 120 nonprofits, so you are indirectly helping good causes. Prices are higher than most charity thrifts, but it's 25 percent off everything on Mondays, 30 percent off for seniors over 55 on Tuesdays and 25 percent off on Thursdays if you sign up for a VIP card. This is a very large, two-part store (Value Village on the left and Unique on the right). Items can be brought to either store to donate.

10141 New Hampshire Ave., Silver Spring;  
301-431-7450; savers.com

### >> UNIQUE THRIFT/VALUE VILLAGE

A for-profit that's part of the Unique/Savers brand. There's a large stock of clothes, furniture, housewares and appliances. On many holiday Mondays, goods are 50 percent off. These are popular days, so you may wait for dressing rooms and cashiers. Donations accepted during business hours.

12211 Veirs Mill Road, Wheaton;  
301-962-0600; savers.com

### >> URBAN THRIFT

The proceeds from the clothes, housewares, furniture, jewelry, linens, electronics, etc. sold here benefit The Arc Montgomery County, which helps young children, older youths, adults and seniors, many with disabilities. Register online for its 50-percent-off sale notices. Donated goods cannot include mattresses, large appliances or non-flat-screen TVs.

10730 Connecticut Ave., Kensington;  
301-933-5666;  
thearcmontgomerycounty.org



At Interfaith Works Clothing Center in Rockville, donations go out as fast as they come in. **Bottom left:** Shoppers can fill up large, blue Ikea bags. **Bottom right:** A new boutique within Interfaith Works offers business attire for people who have interviews or office jobs.





## INSIDE A NONPROFIT CLOTHING CENTER

Every day, a huge pile of plastic bags filled with donated clothing stacks up at the **Interfaith Works Clothing Center**, which is located in a recently renovated former school in Rockville. Despite the abundance, the demand for clothes by our county's needy is so great "we're running out of clothing," says center director Monica Barberis-Young.

The 45-year-old charity clothes some 13,000 income-qualified residents each year, including nearly 6,000 Montgomery County children.

Volunteers sort and hang clothes throughout the day. Just as rapidly, clients arrive and are given blue Ikea bags that they may fill once a month. "What comes in our back door goes quickly out our front door," Barberis-Young says. "But please give us things you would wear yourself or give to a neighbor. We don't have time to throw away other people's trash."

There's a new section, set off in a blond-wood boutique, called **Dress to Impress**. This is higher-end clothing, shoes and handbags, some with original tags, and it's given to people with job interviews or office jobs. A 12-station computer lab helps train clients to apply for jobs online and build résumés. A layette room always needs baby clothes, diapers and toys.

The center also accepts donations of dishes, silverware, blankets, linens, school supplies, cleaning supplies, backpacks and even toilet paper. Referrals for help come from county schools, mental health agencies, shelters, hospitals, jails and religious congregations. Some 165 congregations are under the Interfaith umbrella, and their members are donors and volunteers. But longtime volunteers are aging out.

"Our immigrant population is struggling and scared," says Barberis-Young, noting that Interfaith Works Clothing Center experienced a drop of 500 clients immediately after President Donald Trump's inauguration. "We had to make a special point of saying this is a safe zone," and then the clients returned, she says. "We have nothing to do with the federal government."

An immigrant from Ethiopia has shown the power of one volunteer. Now in college, this 17-year-old has been organizing the filling and distribution of 3,000 backpacks each August. "He was helped when his family arrived five years ago," Barberis-Young says, "and now he runs this program."



INTERFAITH WORKS PHOTOS BY SKIP BROWN



# FURNITURE & HOUSEHOLD ITEMS

## WHERE TO SELL

### >> CAPITAL CONSIGNMENT

Proprietors Judy Carrig and Ivan Huarita acquire high-quality couches, tables, chairs, housewares, jewelry, glassware, mirrors and more. First send a photograph of your item(s) with dimensions, age, maker and composition. Consignors receive 50 percent of sale prices. The shop recommends that movers bring in or remove large pieces. Interior designers and bargain hunters frequent the store for its showroom quality pieces, which are not "glued and screwed" mass-market items. Prices are marked down 20 percent after one month, and consignments end after 60 days.

4909 Cordell Ave., Bethesda;  
301-986-1414; [facebook.com/capital.consignment](https://www.facebook.com/capital.consignment)

### >> FINE CONSIGNS BETHESDA

Like its across-the-street neighbor, Capital Consignment, this attractive new shop takes living room chairs, love seats, framed art, jewelry, lamps and other home décor in beautiful shape. Co-owner



Fine Consigns Bethesda

Carol Hindin worked for Neiman Marcus and Bloomingdale's, and her brother, Rick Hindin, founded Britches of Georgetowne men's clothing store. Consignors are paid 50 percent of sale prices, and the consigning period is 60 days. Items are reduced 20 percent after 30 days. Email photos of potential consignments to [fineconsignsbethesda@gmail.com](mailto:fineconsignsbethesda@gmail.com).

4916 Cordell Ave., Bethesda;  
301-718-3400; [facebook.com/fineconsignsbethesda](https://www.facebook.com/fineconsignsbethesda)

### >> MY BIG FINDS

Consignment shop featuring household goods and gifts, especially vintage items

and shabby chic décor. Tables, desks, storage pieces, lighting, outdoor furniture and kitchenware is "restored, reclaimed and upcycled." Quirky, collectible and repurposed antique items are found here. Consignors should call for an appointment. They receive 50 percent of the selling price.

215 Market St. W., Gaithersburg;  
301-704-4091; [mybigfinds.com](https://www.mybigfinds.com)

### >> S&K CONSIGNMENT GALLERY

Most of the silver, furniture, lamps, china, vintage clothes and artwork in this abundant second-story gallery come from estate sales handled by Sloans & Kenyon. Most gallery items are \$300 or less, with frequent discounts. Consignors should send a photo and description of items to [kenyons@sloansandkenyon.com](mailto:kenyons@sloansandkenyon.com) to start the process. Consignors receive 50 percent of sale prices.

7034 Wisconsin Ave., Chevy Chase;  
301-634-2345; [sloansandkenyon.com](https://www.sloansandkenyon.com)

### >> SAGE CONSIGNMENT

Smaller pieces of furniture, china, jewelry, some vintage clothes and books, and housewares are taken at this unusual shop, which also has renewed and repurposed furniture. Consignors send photos to [consignment@sageconsignment.com](mailto:consignment@sageconsignment.com) and wait for a response before delivering items. Owner Michel Huebner runs estate sales and will look for requests from customers.

3734 Howard Ave., Kensington;  
301-530-5723; [sageconsignment.com](https://www.sageconsignment.com)



FINE CONSIGNS PHOTO BY SARAH HOGUE; MY BIG FINDS PHOTO BY STEPHEN WALKER

STEPHANIE KENYON PHOTO BY SKIP BROWN



## WHERE TO DONATE

### >> A WIDER CIRCLE

Furniture (including mattresses in good shape), towels, bedding, linens, curtains, housewares. No bed pillows. Will pick up, but there's often a four-week delay. Easy drop-off seven days a week, with employees removing items from your car. The goods are given to some 120,000 adults and children referred yearly by nearly 500 government, nonprofit and faith agencies.

9159 Brookville Road, Silver Spring;  
301-608-3504; [awidercircle.org](http://awidercircle.org)

### >> GOODWILL RETAIL STORE & DONATION CENTER

Accepts clothing, furniture, small appliances, housewares, electronics, toys, computers, cars. Overloaded with furniture donations, so call before bringing large pieces.

4816 Bolling Brook Parkway, Rockville;  
301-881-0744;  
619 S. Frederick Ave., Gaithersburg;  
301-527-0970; [dcgoodwill.org](http://dcgoodwill.org)

### >> HABITAT FOR HUMANITY RESTORE

Accepts appliances, furniture, antiques, doors, windows, tile and lighting fixtures. Will pick up items from your home.

1029 E. Gude Drive, Rockville;  
301-947-3304;  
12006 Plum Orchard Drive, Silver Spring;  
301-990-0014; [habitatmm.org](http://habitatmm.org)

### >> HOUSING UNLIMITED

This charity provides affordable housing for nearly 200 people in mental health recovery. It accepts donations of high-quality furniture, kitchen items, artwork, linens and other household goods to furnish the 70 homes it has bought and renovated. Vehicles also can be donated. Call for a drop-off or home pickup time.

12125 Veirs Mill Road, #201, Silver Spring;  
301-592-9314; [housingunlimited.org](http://housingunlimited.org)

### >> MONTGOMERY COUNTY THRIFT SHOP

Accepts household goods, clothing, shoes, cameras, sports equipment, linens, jewelry, books, CDs and tools. Proceeds help five local nonprofits: Planned Parenthood, the Montgomery County Federation of Women's Clubs, the National Council of Jewish Women, EveryMind for mental wellness, and the Suburban Hospital Auxiliary.

7125 Wisconsin Ave., Bethesda;  
301-654-0063; [mocothrft.org](http://mocothrft.org)

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Stephanie Kenyon of Sloans & Kenyon holds in store and online auctions. "Cut out as many middlemen as possible," she tells people who are selling fine jewelry or watches.

Stephanie Kenyon has been selling locals' jewelry, silver, furs, stamp and coin collections, vintage clothing and furniture for four decades. Her company, **Sloans & Kenyon**, holds live auctions at its Bethesda store every two months, online auctions for couture and costumes three times a year, and online auctions for jewelry and silver six times yearly. Unlike old furniture, jewelry from generations past is valuable and sought after.

She has one overriding tip for people selling fine jewelry or watches: "Cut out as many middlemen as possible."

Rather than paying customers cash for jewelry and then selling it in stores or via the internet, Kenyon accepts consignments and puts the jewelry on a worldwide auction site. She asks potential consignors to send a photo to [kenyons@sloansandkenyon.com](mailto:kenyons@sloansandkenyon.com) to start the process.

"You benefit from the competition," she says. Companies that buy your jewelry outright may pay you less because they will be reselling it to brokers.

Buyers also do not have to tell you what they know about your piece. "Buyers take advantage of people's ignorance," Kenyon says. "People have heard of Cartier and Tiffany, but not the many other collectible artisans."

With crisp and enlargeable photos, the internet has brought worldwide buyers for jewelry. "We get requests for condition reports for the jewelry on our site," Kenyon says. "We email them, and the sale goes through without the buyer ever touching it or seeing it in person. Everything's insured, so it's a pretty easy way to get top dollar for the things you inherited."

TOO MUCH  
**STUFF**



## INSIDE A WIDER CIRCLE

A Wider Circle (AWC) is a lifesaver for the downsizer and for 120,000 children and adults whose homes have been furnished by this 17-year-old Silver Spring charity.

It began with a simple mission of providing beds so our less well-off neighbors would not have to sleep on floors. It has grown to outfit 35 families a day with beds, dressers, tables, chairs, linens and housewares. Some 63 full- and part-time employees handle and fulfill the 15,000 requests for beds that AWC receives each year.

It is so popular with donors that there can be four-week waits for trucks to pick up items. AWC also accepts mattresses in good condition, which is rare among nonprofits. Making it possible was an investment in \$3,000 commercial steamers, which clean beds, couches and upholstered furniture before they are put out for clients to select.

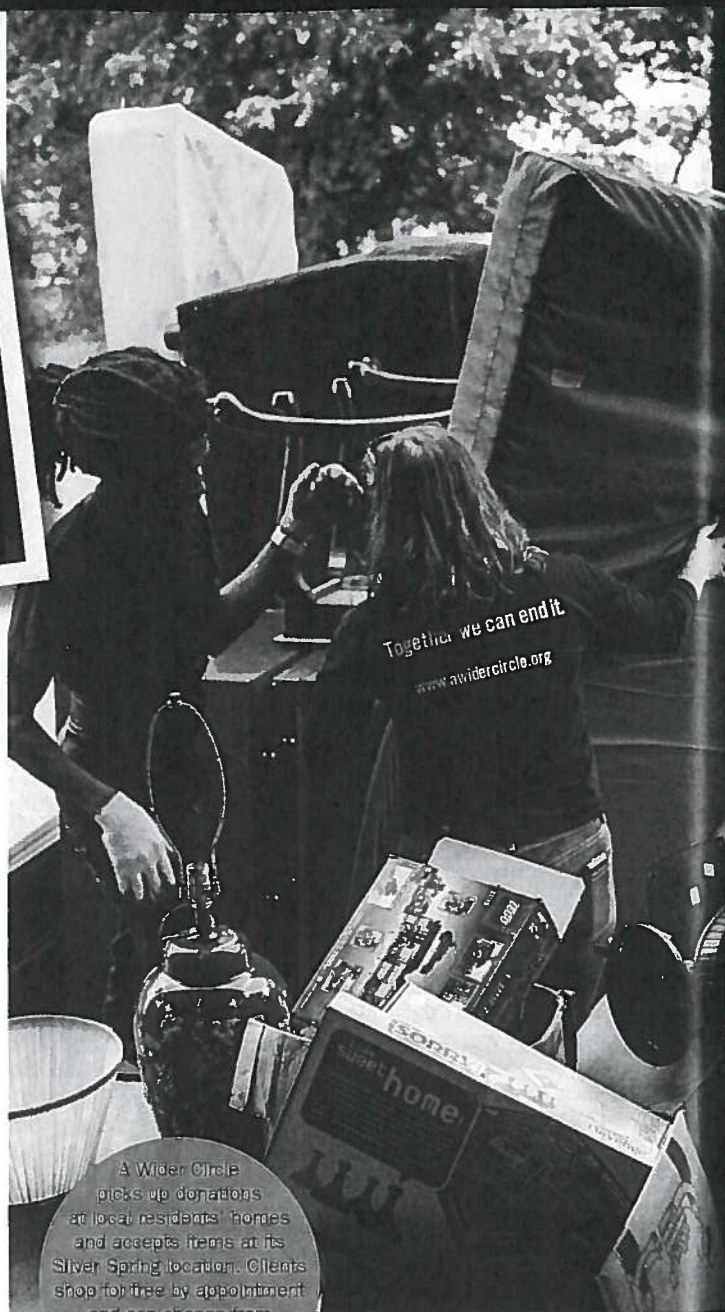
Nearly 500 government, nonprofit and faith agencies refer those in need to the charity's furniture showroom. Clients come from Montgomery County, the District, Prince George's County and Baltimore, and they shop for free by appointment.

Furniture or smaller items such as linens, curtains, clothes, towels, lamps or housewares can be dropped off during business hours, and volunteers help transfer donations from cars. The charity doesn't accept pillows or large appliances.

Donated women's and men's business attire is housed in a modern boutique where clients can get clothes for job interviews.

"Donate items you would be proud to get," advises founder Mark Bergel, who slept on the floor himself for years to remember how urgent the need is. "We are dealing with dignity and a human connection here."

Bergel says there are 14 million more people in poverty in the United States today than when A Wider Circle was founded. "Compassion is the way we will end poverty. Donate as if this is your family in need."



A Wider Circle picks up donations at local residents' homes and accepts items at its Silver Spring location. Clients shop for free by appointment and can choose from furniture (top left), business attire (below) and more.



A WIDER CIRCLE PHOTOS BY SMP BROWN





## HOW TO DOWNSIZE

It took longtime Kensington resident **Karen Jaffe** about three months to downsize.

"I learned the hard way it's no longer easy to get boxes," says Jaffe, who had lived in her four-bedroom house for 29 years. This past August, she and her partner, Bob Price, unexpectedly found a smaller house in Silver Spring when they thought they were just looking. They quickly needed to find a new home for a lot of their stuff.

*Here was her strategy for getting things done:*

1. Called A Wider Circle (301-608-3504) to get on its waiting list for truck pickup. When Jaffe called, the wait was more than a month, and her timetable was two weeks. She put smaller items in her car and made four trips to its Silver Spring location to drop things off.
2. Collected boxes. She made friends at her local Safeway and at a liquor store, and persuaded them to give her boxes before they were flattened.
3. Hired three strong teens through her Rock Creek Hills group email list to help move and transport. They drove more than 100 books for donation to the Friends of the Library store in Rockville.
4. Called Montgomery County trash pickup for its free, outside-the-norm trash collection. A reservation (online at [montgomerycountymd.gov/bulktrash](http://montgomerycountymd.gov/bulktrash) or by calling 311) is needed, and you need to separate wooden items (bookcases) from metal (file cabinets). Reservations need to be received by the day before your usual collection day.
5. Encouraged her daughter to fly from Chicago and help sort. They made piles of clothes to donate to A Wider Circle and to Reddz Trading



Karen Jaffe made a plan to downsize her Kensington home.

and Remix Recycling Co., both consignment shops in Bethesda.

6. Eliminated half the art, furniture, contents of shelves, books and plants for the house showing. Most items went to A Wider Circle.
7. Downsized her files. Paper is the most time-consuming category to sort. Jaffe's looming deadline for showing her house forced her to schedule time with one of the teen helpers to plow through papers. The county's Department of Environmental Protection has free, drive-through shredding events ([montgomerycountymd.gov/sws/programs/paper-shredding.html](http://montgomerycountymd.gov/sws/programs/paper-shredding.html)), and local real estate agents and community associations also schedule them.
8. Had a garage sale for the too-big-to-haul items, such as the entertainment center. She also advertised some items on Craigslist.

*continued from page 101*

### >> OPPORTUNITY SHOP

A consignment and thrift shop featuring clothing, shoes and accessories, art, baby gear, linens, rugs, housewares, lamps and tables. Consignors receive 60 percent of sale prices, with the remainder helping the St. John's Norwood parish mission.

4504 Walsh St., Bethesda; 301-654-4999;  
[stjohnsnorwood.org/op-shop](http://stjohnsnorwood.org/op-shop)

### >> THE SALVATION ARMY

Home pickups scheduled one to two weeks in advance. Publishes a useful donation value guide on its website, from air conditioners to clothes to typewriters.  
(See listing in *Clothing* on page 98.)

### >> WAGGING TAILS THRIFT & GIFTS

Proceeds from this well-organized shop benefit the Montgomery County Humane Society. It sells household goods from couches to lamps, and clothes, books and movies. Don't be fooled by its small storefront—it is a huge space. Prices are higher than most thrift stores, but the quality is high.

1310 E. Gude Drive, Rockville; 301-279-0345;  
[mchumane.org/support/thrift-store](http://mchumane.org/support/thrift-store)

### WHERE TO PAY TO RECYCLE

#### >> DONATION NATION

Customers pay to have their furniture (and appliances, electronics, old paint cans and more) removed in exchange for tax-deductible donations to local charities. People ages 60 and older get a 25 percent discount.

The nonprofit operates a resale shop that features couches, lamps and a variety of household items. Real estate agents use the service for house cleanouts or to declutter properties before showings.

15920 Tournament Drive, Gaithersburg;  
855-362-9253; [donationnationusa.org](http://donationnationusa.org)





## ON THE BOOKS

Martha Dean has a problem similar to many of her Montgomery County neighbors: too many books and a need to downsize.

This prompted her to attend the free monthly book appraisal event held at **Second Story Books'** sprawling Parklawn Drive store in Rockville. There, book appraiser and history expert Allan Stypeck holds court as dozens of book lovers bring their treasures and listen to him describe their history and probable value.

Customers sit in two rows of mismatched office chairs, moving closer as an unfailingly cheerful

Stypeck educates the crowd about whatever is being pulled out of shopping bags. He works from memory, mostly, but does tap his laptop to check values on BookFinder.com and several antiquarian sites. Books of sufficient value can be consigned to the store, which on one Saturday included a first edition of John Steinbeck's *Of Mice and Men* (\$2,000), an Ethiopian accordion bible built to body height (\$500) and an original Disney drawing (\$3,000).

"I just don't want all our very fine books to go to Goodwill," Dean says. Her late husband traveled extensively

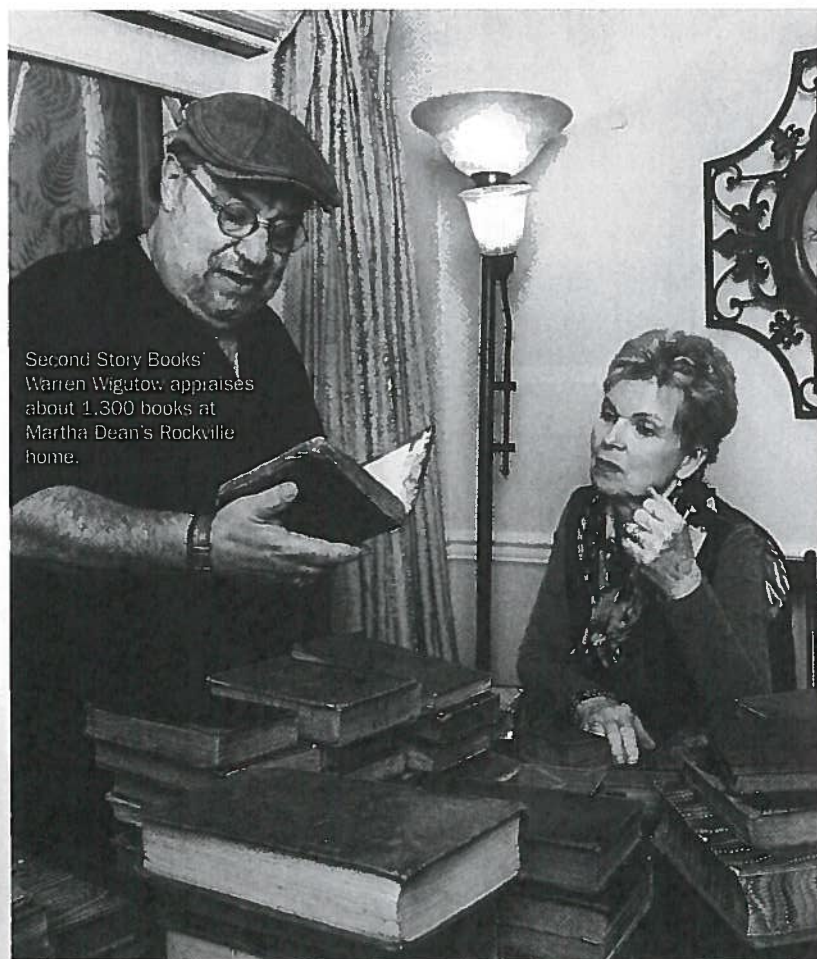
and collected his finds from rare bookshops worldwide.

Dean, who cleaned out her father's house and her mother-in-law's condo, vowed to sort her possessions now. "I promise, I promise, I promise, I won't do this to my children. I want to do it now."

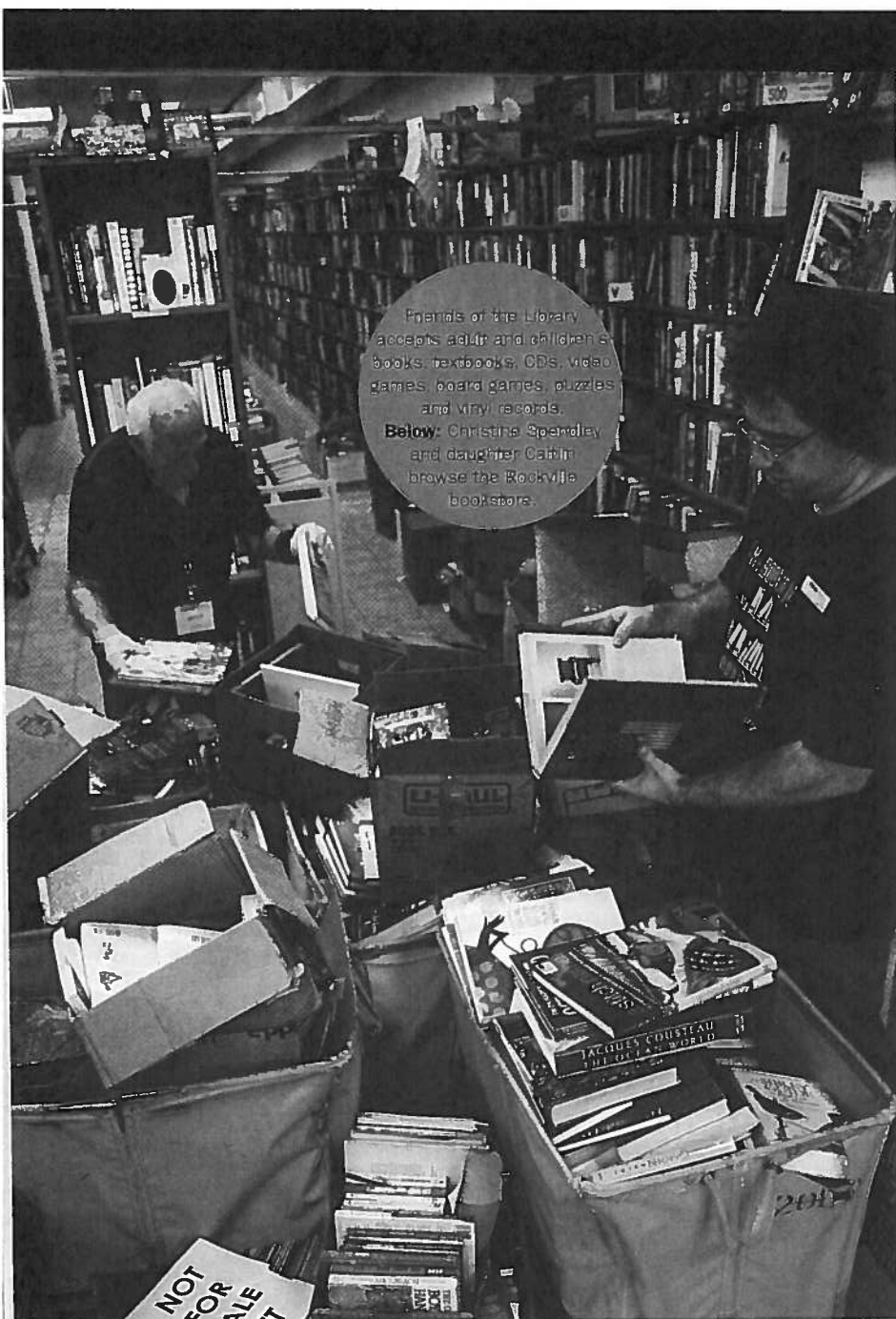
After learning about Second Story Books' home-visit service, she scheduled an appointment—she estimates there are 1,300 collectible books in her Rockville home. The store's in-home book appraiser, Warren Wigutow, fills his days evaluating books in homes throughout the area. Appointments are made if you have more than five boxes of books of top literature, professional or academic titles. "If it's just old best-sellers, we'd prefer not to make house calls," manager Dave Hammann says.

Local residents with too many books have several options. For most people, donating books to your branch of the county library makes the most economic and civic sense. You'll earn more in charitable tax credits (usually \$1 per hardback, 50 cents for paperbacks) than you would by selling them. You also may take items to **Friends of the Library** bookstores in Rockville and Silver Spring. They accept adult and children's books, textbooks, CDs, video games, board games, puzzles and vinyl records.

"We take in thousands of books a day and sell thousands a day," says Lance Salins, business coordinator of the Friends store in Rockville. Surprises are found, including a signed first edition of Ernest Hemingway's *A Farewell to Arms* discovered in a stack of books donated in a liquor box. That book brought \$6,000 to the Friends' coffers. Revenue from the bookstores has paid for rugs, puzzles and stuffed animals for the kids areas in the libraries, staff development, book purchases and digital tablets.



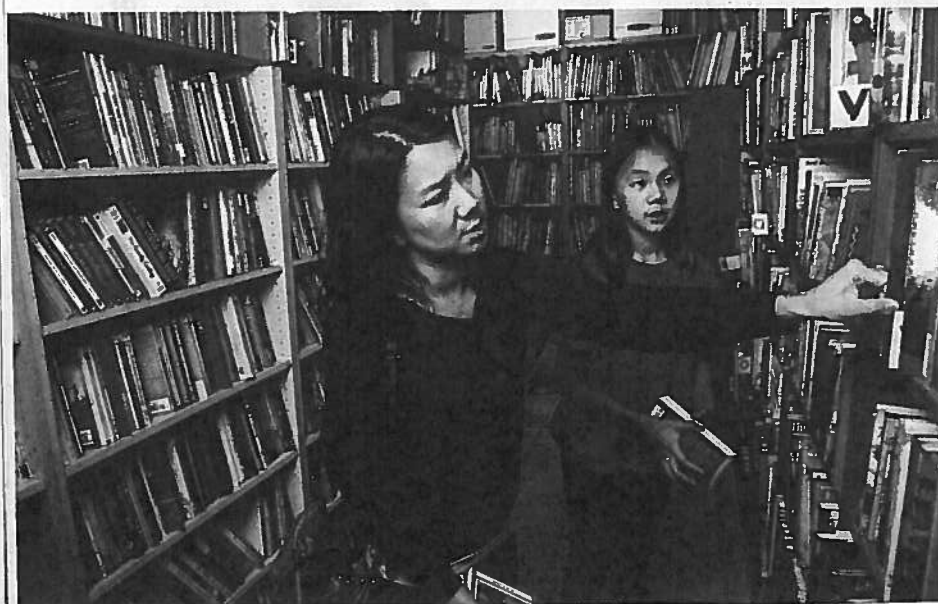
Second Story Books' Warren Wigutow appraises about 1,300 books at Martha Dean's Rockville home.



Friends of the Library accepts adult and children's books, textbooks, CDs, video games, board games, puzzles and vinyl records.

**Below:** Christine Spensley and daughter Caitlin browse the Rockville bookstore.

NOT FOR SALE



100  
STUFF

## BOOKS, RECORDS & CDS

### WHERE TO SELL

#### >> KENSINGTON ROW BOOKSHOP

The shop selectively buys high-quality used and out-of-print books. Its second floor includes a Catalan language library.

3786 Howard Ave., Kensington; 301-949-9416; [kensingtonrowbookshop.com](http://kensingtonrowbookshop.com)

#### >> SECOND STORY BOOKS

Used and rare books, maps, CDs, DVDs, manuscripts, prints and paper ephemera are bought daily. Appointments for home visits available for large collections (more than five boxes). Buyers are on duty during all business hours, but call ahead to clear space if you're bringing more than a few boxes of books.

12160 Parklawn Drive, Rockville; 301-770-0477; [secondstorybooks.com](http://secondstorybooks.com)

#### >> WONDER BOOK

The Gaithersburg store is one of three Maryland locations that buys books, movies and sheet music. Purchase prices are low, but the shop will take every item you bring in, and remove boxes from your car. Home visits made for more than 1,000 books.

15976 Shady Grove Road, Gaithersburg; 301-977-9166; [wonderbk.com](http://wonderbk.com)

### WHERE TO DONATE

#### >> FRIENDS OF THE LIBRARY BOOKSTORE

Accepts clean, good-condition books in all languages, vinyl records, CDs, movies, video games, comics, current year magazines, board games and puzzles. Extensive children's and teen sections. Tax receipts given at drop-off. Staff helps unload boxes from your car.

4886 Bolling Brook Parkway, Rockville; 301-984-3300; 8901 Colesville Road, Silver Spring; 301-933-1110; [foimc.org/bookstores](http://foimc.org/bookstores)



## 1988 STUFF



# LET IT GO, LET IT GO

Cindy Szparaga used to work in health insurance. Alexandra Fry managed relocations for the Foreign Service. These Bethesda friends joined forces 16 years ago to found **Orchestrated Moves** to help the rest of us get organized. For \$85 an hour, they'll sort your possessions, assist with donations, disperse items to family and friends, arrange bulk trash pickups, recycle and connect with consignment shops specific to your goods. On average, it takes them 40 hours to trim the contents of a four-bedroom house into a manageable amount for a move into a condo or assisted living, or to prepare a house for sale.

They are experts at finding the right places for your excess. "In the back of my trunk is an entire duffel bag of Latvian books," Fry says. "I'm taking them to the Latvian Embassy."

Their motto is, "Decluttering: It's Easier Than You Think." Before you roll your eyes, take in what these pros know:

» Putting your stuff in storage is "just a very expensive delayed decision." They counsel their clients to swallow hard and sell or donate every piece of furniture they are not using.

» There is free disposal of paint and hazardous materials such as bug spray and rusted metal at the county's Shady Grove Transfer Station, 16101 Frederick Road, Derwood. Szparaga and Fry use it three times a week.

» Moving elderly relatives and cleaning out houses "has just fallen to the female side of the family," Szparaga says. "I can count on one hand where a son was the primary boots on

the ground." So daughters, prepare yourselves. This can add resentment to the normal family tension over relocations.

» Use the civic-minded impulses of the children of the Depression, now in their 80s and 90s, to declutter. "They'll save sour cream containers because they find everything useful," Fry says. If Szparaga and Fry can come up with a responsible place for these items, they get clients' enthusiastic OKs to donate them. Empty cartons and twist ties go to schools for art projects. Larger items go to Habitat for Humanity's two local stores and to other nonprofits.

» Sentimentality can cripple your downsizing. "There's absolutely no resale value for most of the nice belongings from past generations," Szparaga says. "A \$10,000 set of Waterford crystal just went for \$400 at an estate sale. These are fine brands and are so beautiful, but there's no market now. Just be grateful you used them well and move on."

» Start now. Say "yes" to calls from charities offering to pick up items from your home and start sorting the easier stuff to donate. It's become competitive in our area to get goods into consignment shops or estate sales and auctions. "Resources for resale are drying up," Fry says. "It's a huge issue for us. Consignment shops and estate companies are full up."

*Margaret Engel, co-author of Thrift-Style: The Ultimate Bargain Shopper's Guide to Smart Fashion, has visited more than 210 thrift stores across the country.*

## ELECTRONICS

### WHERE TO SELL

#### » PHOENIX COMPUTERS

This nonprofit accepts computers, keyboards, cables and hard drives during business hours (no appointment needed). It partners with the Jewish Council for the Aging of Greater Washington to offer low-cost computers and tech training.

11910-G Parklawn Drive, Rockville;  
301-881-4500; phoenixcomputers.info

## OFFICE SUPPLIES, OFFICE FURNITURE, MEDICAL EQUIPMENT

### WHERE TO DONATE

#### » MONTGOMERY COUNTY VOLUNTEER CENTER

Email a description of your extra items to the weekly Hotlink list of products. Those interested in your goods are responsible for picking them up.

12900 Middlebrook Road,  
Suite 1600, Germantown; 240-777-2600;  
montgomerycountymd.gov/volunteercenter/  
volunteers/donations.html

#### » KENSINGTON VOLUNTEER FIRE DEPARTMENT

Since the 1960s, it has operated a "closet" that loans medical equipment for free, and financial donations are accepted, too. Accepts walkers, wheelchairs, shower chairs, canes and crutches, but no hospital beds. Loaned wheelchairs require a returnable \$25 deposit. The closet is open Mondays 6:30 to 7:30 p.m., but equipment donations and emergency requests can be handled daily.

10620 Connecticut Ave., Kensington;  
240-773-4705

#### » COLESVILLE LIONS CLUB

The service club, along with affiliates in Sandy Spring and Olney, runs a free hospital closet that accepts donations of wheelchairs, walkers, shower chairs, commodes, hospital beds and eyeglasses. No crutches. Those who wish to donate or who need equipment can call club Treasurer Al Ferraro at 301-919-4319 or the Turf Center at Spencerville Road and New



Hampshire Avenue, where the storage trailer is located.

1409 Spencerville Road, Spencerville;  
301-384-6300

## SPORTS EQUIPMENT

### WHERE TO SELL

#### >> REPLAY SPORTS

Consign your old baseball, football, lacrosse, hockey, fitness and weight-training equipment or bicycles for cash or trade. Sellers receive 30 percent of sale prices or 40 percent in store credit.

15245 Display Drive, Rockville;  
301-340-2727; [replaysportsmd.com](http://replaysportsmd.com)

### WHERE TO DONATE

#### >> BIKES FOR THE WORLD

This charity collects children's and adult bikes and asks for a minimum \$10 per bike donation to defray overseas shipping costs. It also accepts spare bike parts, helmets, locks, bike tools and portable metal sewing machines in working order. Bikes for this charity may be dropped off at City Bikes in Chevy Chase.

11720 Parklawn Drive, Rockville;  
703-740-7856; [bikesfortheworld.org](http://bikesfortheworld.org)

## ONLINE RESELLERS

#### >> ISOLDIT

Sellers drop off items to be sold online. The company, part of a nationwide chain, photographs, researches and tracks your items online, and ships them to winning bidders. Home visits are available for a fee. Most sellers receive 50 to 80 percent of an item's sale price.

12101 Darnestown Road, Gaithersburg;  
301-990-2040; [isolditmd.com](http://isolditmd.com)

#### >> FACEBOOK MARKETPLACE

From cars to cake stands to kayaks, the Marketplace site lets you sell or search within 2 to 100 miles of Bethesda. Sellers and buyers arrange through Facebook where to meet to transfer goods.

[facebook.com/marketplace](https://facebook.com/marketplace) ■



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JGLLAW

FAMILY LAW

## Divorcing after 50?



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You're not alone. More couples are divorcing in their later years. What's become known as "gray divorce" brings more challenges, especially since you have fewer years left to make up for the financial loss when dividing assets. Jeffrey Greenblatt is a renowned attorney, who has practiced family law exclusively for the past 43 years. He will protect your rights and help you move forward. With the right guidance you will be prepared to make the most of the next phase of your life.

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