

Thrift store reinvests profits back into community

By Kathryn Reed

It was getting to the point that the store looked more used than the items on the shelves.

Fourteen years after the Attic Thrift Store moved to its Lodi Avenue location, it finally got a thorough spring-cleaning. It was so intense the shop was closed for six weeks before reopening last month.



Pat Lacey is in charge of house wares at the Attic Thrift Store. Photos/Kathryn Reed

A fresh coat of paint complements the new flooring, curtains and display cases.

“It was getting pretty raunchy,” says Pat Lacey, one of the nearly 125 volunteers who make up the Barton Auxiliary.

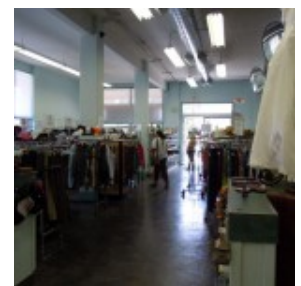
The auxiliary, which is in its 51st year, opened the South Lake Tahoe thrift store in 1961. Through the years it has raised millions of dollars. In the early days this money is

where the payroll came from for the doctors at Barton Memorial Hospital.

The \$315,000 the group raised in 2010 is going to pay for the \$800,000 expansion and renovation of the Barton Community Clinic.

The bulk of what the auxiliary raises is from the thrift store.

During the recession donations have not tapered off, but the number of people shopping has shot up.



The Attic is cleaner and less cluttered.

“We have some really nice stuff. Some things from stores are brand new,” Lacey said while sitting on one of the couches that is for sale. “The celebrity golf tournament (last year) donated T-shirts. Harrah’s donated shirts, too.”

A designer dress with the original \$159 price tag came in recently. It sold for a few dollars within minutes. Pricing is consistent for a particular item; it’s not based on the age or wear and tear of it.

Children’s clothing is popular because little ones outgrow their clothes so fast that most of these items look like they have not been worn much.



Baby clothes
sell well.

Plenty of shorts are on racks now. Jeans are something the Attic seems to keep a steady supply of.

No clothes with holes are put out – and workers would rather they were never donated. Children's clothing gets washed on site, but not any of the other garments. Nelta Brown handles all the baby stuff.

Several straw hats with red, white and blue piping around them have been donated. Odds are they'll be snatched up for a Fourth of July party.

Lacey is responsible for the house wares area. She's sold a ton of canning jars lately. As she straightens the shelves, she makes sure the Father's Day mugs are front and center.

Although the prices on items are relatively inexpensive, most days the Attic has a sale. On Friday it was half off on DVDs. There's even a free table out front. Things that have been in the store awhile often end up there, along with dinnerware with a chip in it.

Workers know some people shop for deals and then resale the item at a higher price.

"If they want to make money, we don't care. It's free to us," Lacey explained. She relayed the story of a guy buying a \$4 piece of artwork and selling it for \$150.

Most of the workers are from the auxiliary – so they are

working for free. The store manager, Henry Suarez, is paid. So are a few of the guys who help with sorting and doing the heavy lifting.

The Attic is open Monday through Friday, 10am to 4pm and Saturdays 10am to 2pm. For information, call (530) 541.3378.