

Thrift stores form alliance

By Dan Nephin
Associated Press Writer

PITTSBURGH (AP) - Thrift store outlets in southwestern Pennsylvania have formed an alliance to cut costs and boost sales so more money goes to their causes.

"In today's nonprofit world, certainly more than anywhere else, the press is on for collaborations and partnerships and reduction in duplication of services," said Michael Smith, president and chief executive officer of Goodwill Industries of Pittsburgh.

Bringing in more money on their own means less reliance on other funding sources and, in turn, more flexibility in how that money can be spent, he said.

Goodwill, with its 22 stores in southwestern Pennsylvania and West Virginia, makes up the largest bloc of the Alliance of Nonprofit Stores, which was announced this week. The Salvation Army has 10 stores, while the rest are from St. Vincent de Paul, Bethlehem Haven and the National Council of Jewish Women.

The group's motto is, "Shopping never felt so good. Giving never felt so right."

None of the 40 stores plans to close. Instead, the alliance will look for ways to save money by buying in bulk and finding vendors who will give them deals.

Fred Just, executive director of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul in Pittsburgh, came up with the idea. He said foundations and government are increasingly putting more emphasis on collaboration.

Christine Nyirjesy Bragale, a spokeswoman for Goodwill Industries International, said while Goodwill partners with other nonprofits at times, the alliance is the first of its type that

she's aware of.

Besides bargains, the alliance will spread the message about thrift stores' charitable missions, such as work force development and community service.

It also will address how to donate items. Trash and poor quality donations pose a significant problem to thrift stores.

"We're trying to better people's lives and turn people's lives around. We certainly wouldn't want somebody to say, 'Here's this ripped up, stained coat. It's good enough for you because you don't have one,'" said Kelly Pezze, manager of a consignment store operated by Bethlehem Haven, which serves homeless women in Pittsburgh.

"If you wouldn't wear it or let somebody in your family wear it, throw it out," she said.

Just said today's shops are "not your grandmother's thrift store."

Thrift stores are "one of the best-kept name brand fashion secrets," said Smith, noting that shoppers aren't going to find items like a Liz Claiborne blouse for \$4 elsewhere.

Thrift store shoppers "love the hunt, they love the thrill of the hunt and, bottom line, they love the bargain. It's much more of a treasure if you get a bargain," said Adele Meyer, executive director of the National Association of Resale & Thrift Shops.

Thrift stores sometimes partner to advertise, but the alliance goes further, Meyer said.

While members are competitors, Smith said the alliance is more concerned about competition from for-profit retailers such as Wal-Mart, dollar stores and bargain outlets like TJ Maxx.

Other competitors are for-profit resale stores, some of which also use donation boxes that can't easily be differentiated from those of charitable thrift stores, Just said.

Bronner studies Americans

Bronner cont'd from 1

which allows him easy access to the Pennsylvania House of Representatives and various state institutions. The rich American culture is the reason Bronner does not take his intelligence to University Park. "This is the place to be. This is where the action is."

Bronner also stated that PSH is the only campus that offers a graduate program in American Studies, and has the best students.

American Folklore is Bronner's passion. He finds the study "engaging and fascinating." Bronner described the field in his own words: "It's continually giving me surprises. I feel like I have scoured the waterfront, but I always discover a new ship docked."

There are times when Bronner is not running around collecting

folklore (though that is few and far between). When he does get some time to himself, he enjoys writing, reading, book collecting, watching movies, and playing sports. Playing sports allowed Bronner to add yet another award to his name: his PSH intramural basketball team won the championship against all the other campuses; including University Park. Bronner is quick to point out, "that was 40 lbs. ago, [I] had hair, and could jump."

Bronner also spends time with his family, which consists of his wife of 7 years and two beautiful children; Shulamit (5) and Eitan (4). Bronner describes his two children as "being research subjects," since he spends a lot of time studying children's folklore and he's close to a much needed source. And as for the uniqueness of their names? "They're ethnic names. Shulamit comes from Song of Solomon and Eitan means strength."

Though his focus is American Studies, Bronner certainly has plenty of experience in the world of Communications as well. He had his own radio show called "Boogie Woogie 1970," where he played folk, country, and old-time music. More to The Capital Times' own heart, he also was a writer for the college paper, reporting on arts and entertainment. Bronner feels the paper is a great discipline because it "forces themes and deadlines."

Bronner sits on many committees and works on many publications. He is the chair of Committee of American Studies Program, the editor for the Pennsylvania German Society Material World, and sits on at least a dozen more editorial boards for journals and encyclopedias. One would think that with all that he has done and is doing, he would be looking forward to retirement and resting, but Bronner disagrees. "That's not me. My passion is this work."



Dr. Simon Bronner poses with a poster that describes his take on American culture. Bronner has taught American Studies at PSH since 1981.

Hurst speaks at PSH

Boobies cont'd from 1

Because breast cancer is the second deadliest killer of women in the U.S., Hurst said it is important that women under 40 make themselves aware of the

"Whether you do it the way your doctors tell you or however you want, it is important for women to feel their boobies at a young age in order to get familiar with their bodies, allowing them to detect unfamiliar lumps in their breast."

- Leigh Hurst

dangers of breast cancer and the importance of self-examinations and medical checkups.

"If I can get people to say the slogan 'feel your boobies' or even come to a seminar, I feel my program has made a success," she said.

About 25 attended the Monday campus seminar and of that number, four were men.

Robert Holland, a PSH junior, said he attended the seminar because, "I wanted to be educated about the organization and to just learn more about cancer in general."

Although the seminars are primarily intended for a female audience, Hurst said men could get breast cancer, though the incident rate is low.

Kimberly Hill, a PSH health education graduate student, said she organized the seminar because she, too, wanted to raise public awareness. Hurst said the seminars have been successful and have spread largely by word-of-mouth.

In addition to the website, Hurst has designed t-shirts, hats, tank top and other items can be purchased at www.feelyourboobies.com.



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State system warns of possible 10 percent tuition increase

HARRISBURG, Pa. (AP) - Students at Pennsylvania's 14 state-owned universities could face tuition increases of as much as 10 percent next year if the system receives the amount of aid Gov. Ed Rendell has proposed, system officials said.

State System of Higher Education administrators told the system's board Thursday a tuition increase of as much as \$465 a year was necessary to make up the difference between the system's \$464 million state-aid request and the \$443 million subsidy Rendell advocates.

Under that scenario, annual tuition for Pennsylvania undergraduate students would rise from \$4,810 to \$5,275. The board traditionally sets tuition rates in July.

But a top Rendell aide said that kind of increase was unlikely to happen.

"The governor continues to be adamant that before tuition is increased we need to look at wherever we can to cut costs," said David Myers, Rendell's deputy chief of staff. "The state system is the point of access for a lot of people who wouldn't otherwise be able to go to college so they've got to keep tuition down and keep tuition affordable."

Even if the system's entire request were approved, the system proposes to boost tuition by 6 percent in its \$1.2 billion operating budget for 2005-06.

Board Chairman Charles Gomulka said the tuition

projections were presented earlier than usual so legislators and Rendell would understand the impact the governor's budget would have on students and their families.

"These are the facts," he said. "We can't continually be put in a position where we can miraculously find ways to cut costs."

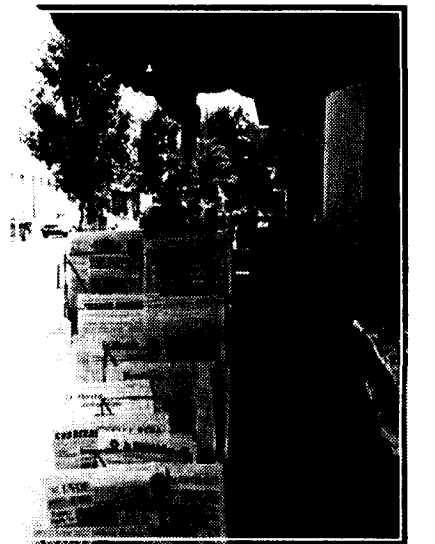
Last year, the state system planned to raise tuition and a technology fee by a total of \$417, but later agreed to a \$212 increase after Rendell intervened and insisted on budget cuts and a salary freeze.

The administration would not rule out a tuition increase for next year, "but we want to make sure no stone is unturned before we get there," Myers said.

The state-owned universities are Bloomsburg, California, Cheyney, Clarion, East Stroudsburg, Edinboro, Indiana, Kutztown, Lock Haven, Mansfield, Millersville, Shippensburg, Slippery Rock, and West Chester.

Rendell's budget also calls for giving less state aid to Penn State University than it requested, but Penn State officials have not revised their tuition projections since they made their request last fall, spokesman Bill Mahon said. Penn State originally envisioned a tuition increase of about 6 percent, based on a state aid request of \$334.8 million; Rendell has proposed \$324.2 million.

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