

Evolve Clothing store continues to evolve

By Bill Rea

After three months, Evolve Clothing is evolving according to plan.

The store, operated by Caledon Community Services (CCS) opened May 5 at its new location on Industrial Road in Bolton, replacing Chez Thrift as the place to acquire good, if somewhat used clothing.

"We think things are going quite well," commented Catherine Adair, manager of retail operations at Evolve Clothing and the nearby Evolve Lifestyle store.

But she also pointed out it's still a work in progress. The receiving area, where people can drop off their contributions of used clothing has been fine tuned, with better signage expected very soon.

The main trouble seems to have been getting the word out to shoppers about the new location, although Adair added they are making progress in that regard.

"We're definitely getting the word out," she remarked, adding they are reaching the young customers, which was one of the targets they have been aiming for.

"We've been receiving lots of donations," she added, also observing the store has attracted new volunteers as well.

While sales are not at the level they eventually hope to see them, Adair they are where they were anticipated to be after three months. She explained the store enjoyed a surge of business right after the opening in May, then there was a bit of a lull. Things have been picking up as knowledge of the new store spreads. They've also been doing surveys on how people hear of the store and the demographics of those shopping.

"It's going based on what I've predicted over time," she said.

Adair is also aware that there is a large market in Caledon that has not yet been tapped; namely people who are still not aware of the store, as well as some people who are not aware that the fashion and lifestyle stores are run by the same agency. Getting that word out is something they are concentrating on.

"We know once somebody comes in the door, we can get them back," She observed.

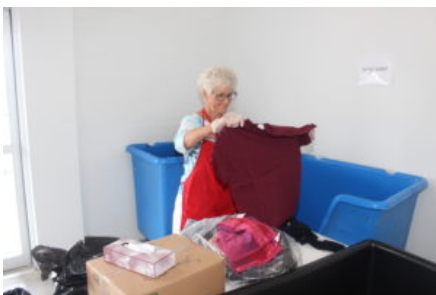
As well, Adair said they have been attracting customers from some distance away, like as far north as Port Perry, east of Pickering, and there have been people from Newfoundland and New Brunswick, who have passed through while camping in the area, and have spread the word when they get home. They're also attracting a lot of business from Toronto, New Tecumseth, Barrie, etc.

And with a few exceptions, the comments they have been receiving about the new store have been positive.

The store has a number of strengths, including lots of space. They have some 8,500 square feet of retail floor space, as well as "the space to receive the donations and sort the donations that we never had," she said.

The people who work there are another strength she cited; "a really cohesive team of staff and volunteers who are taking a lot of pride in the store and are working really hard to make it succeed."

CCS is also making use of the second storey of the building. The agency's transportation department is based there, and there are LIFE for Youth classrooms there, that will start seeing youth at the end of this month.



Evolve Clothing volunteer Suzanne McAndie sorting through contributions that have been dropped off at the facility.