

Outsmart the Recession: Save Money, Even Make Some

By Rich and Rachel Peine

The Upper Keys have a number of resources to help you outsmart the recession, whether you're buying, selling, donating, or volunteering. For example, those single earrings taking up space in your jewelry box could put more money in your pocket than you think, because the price of gold is off the charts right now. A friend of mine took a few odd gold pieces into Coral Financial Jewelry and Pawnshop, the other day and walked out very pleasantly surprised and \$200 richer. More about that later.

You can outsmart the recession, save money, and feel good about yourself when you shop at stores that benefit the local community. Did you know you can get a tax writeoff for donations to the Salvation Army, the Habitat for Humanity Store, and the MARC thrift store? Improve your feng shui and unclutter your life. You can even get furniture picked up - no muss, no fuss, no worry.

You never know what you'll find when you walk into "Sally's" in Key Largo. Barbara, the manager of the Salvation Army store, told me she once sold a Moose head, antlers and all, for \$500. The guy strapped it on top of his truck and headed home to Montana. I know people who scout the store daily, scooping the cream off the new arrivals. Need a wedding dress? Sleeping bag? Tropical shirt? Browse the aisles! Your donation to the Salvation Army store helps their work in feeding the hungry, sheltering the homeless, and providing disaster relief. When the Red River flooded in Fargo, North Dakota last month, the Salvation Army set up mobile food stations, filled sandbags, and provided shelter for people



Visit Elsa, Barbara and Shelly and shop the deals at the Savation Army Store in Key Largo.



Michelle Carhohan Manager of the Habitat for Humanity Store in Key Largo has some great stuff and some real bargains.



Turn at the big red chair and shop for sales while helping out fellow members of your community.

whose homes were under water. So, you can feel good that you helped in that relief effort by supporting the store. The Key Largo store is open Monday through Friday 9:00 - 4:00 and Saturday 9:00 - 3:00, 100109 Overseas Highway, Oceanside.

The Habitat for Humanity Store in Key Largo has the feel of a designer furniture showroom. Everything is like new, but priced way below retail. I saw a Liz Claiborne armoire, a comfy leather chair, and some Drexel Heritage pieces. Their focus is home décor, including a number of prints by Alan Maltz, official wildlife photographer for the state of Florida, for fraction of the cost in his gallery in Key West. The proceeds go to help building homes in our community, including five in Key Largo scheduled for this summer. Michele, the manager, has been a volunteer with Habitat since their beginning in the Upper Keys, and she is the owner of the first home they built. You can call her about donations, and she'd love some volunteers to help in the store or pick up furniture. Store hours are Monday through Saturday, 10:00 - 4:00 at 98970 Overseas Highway, in the median. The number is 453-7855.

One of the not so well known places for bargain hunting is the MARC thrift shop in Islamorada. MARC stands for Monroe Association for Retarded Citizens. This is a great place to shop and help your neighbors at the same time.

MARC provides training in work, life and social skills to mentally and physically disabled folks here in the keys. Some MARC clients work at the MARC offices in Key West and Islamorada and others work in

the community. MARC contracts with businesses for tasks that their clients can perform. Examples are filling envelopes and packing t-shirts in plastic bags.

The store has everything you would want in a good thrift shop. Think furniture, clothes, electronics, books - the list goes on. It is located on the ocean side on Plantation Key just north of the Coral Shores High School on the grounds of Coral Isles Church. Look for the big red chair outside. The Hours are 10:00 to 2:00 Monday through Friday.

Finally, let's get back to Coral Financial. I asked Bill, the owner, how a pawnshop works. If you need a short-term loan, bring in an item to pawn. He'll lend you a percentage of the value for 30 days. When you return with the balance, you get your item back. That's pretty straightforward. He'll also buy



Stop in and see what Bill and Alan at Coral Financial great items they have to offer.

outright, like the jewelry I mentioned earlier. In addition to the pawnshop, Bill specializes in new and classic bicycles. He's got one hanging from the ceiling that's really rare. It's a 1988 Bowden Spacelander, originally designed in 1946 after the Buck Rogers Rocket Patrol. If you have to ask how much it costs, you can't afford it! I guess Rich didn't see the large signs saying "Do Not Touch", because he startled us by beeping the horn on one of the expensive bikes. Oops! If you've never been in, stop by and say hello to Bill and Alan. They're there 9:00 to 6:00 Monday through Saturday, at 102071 Overseas Highway, Oceanside.

So, whether you're buying, selling, volunteering, or pawning, make the recession work for you. There are many resources for the resourceful in the Upper Keys.

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