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WEST ROXBURY

Hub Habitat for Humanity bargain retail store to open Saturday

Posted by Matt Rocheleau March 30, 2011 12:56 PM

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(Courtesy: Habitat for Humanity)

A bathroom sink and vanity along with mirror-reflected images of other items donated to Habitat for Humanity Greater Boston's ReStore that will open in West Roxbury Saturday.

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By Matt Rocheleau, Town Correspondent

Until recently, Habitat for Humanity's Boston-area affiliate had to periodically turn down some enticing donation offers because, quite simply, there was no place to use or store some materials being offered.

But, the opening of a new bargain-priced retail store in West Roxbury this weekend will allow the charitable homebuilding nonprofit to turn much of what would have formerly been considered trash into cash.

"Someone in our office told me the other day, 'it's so nice to answer the phone and to be able to tell the person on the other end you'll be able to accept their donation,'" said [Habitat for Humanity Greater Boston](#) President and CEO Lark Palermo in a phone interview Tuesday.



(Courtesy: Habitat for Humanity)

Donated cabinets.

opportunities to low-income families that are willing to put hundreds of labor hours helping build their home and additional study hours in homeownership classes.

Used items will be available for around 50 percent of their original price or less, depending on their condition, store management said. New items will likely be sold at a discount of around 40 percent off.

While the current retail market is less than ideal for new businesses, "In this economy, people are going to be looking for bargains, and we have lots of them, so we hope that will work to our advantage," Palermo said.

The 12,700 square-foot "ReStore" will open after a year's worth of planning in a busy shopping area along the VFW Parkway near the Dedham Mall – a location Palermo called "ideal." There are five ReStores in Massachusetts, but, of those, the closest to Boston is nearly 30 miles away in Lawrence.

The outlet takes in tax-deductible donations of new and gently-used furniture, appliances, building materials, cabinets, fixtures, and other home-improvement items. Beginning Saturday, the store will resell what Habitat can't use in its home construction projects at prices designed for quick turnover.

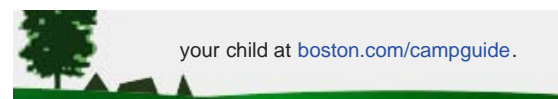
Proceeds support Habitat's home construction and programs that provide affordable ownership

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Sifting through donations brought in thus far has been like “treasure hunting,” the organization’s president said – from an intriguing number of brand new gumball machines to several new bathroom sinks priced around \$2,000 retail to a Murano glass chandelier made in Italy and valued at \$10,000.

“These are some of the things we used to have to say ‘no’ to,” said Palermo.

Habitat said many items at the store are “new or like-new” surplus donated from contractors and companies including Home Depot, Lowe’s, and Whirlpool.

The store will not only help generate funding for Habitat’s broader homebuilding mission, but also help the environment by recycling usable materials and household items that would normally wind up in landfills.

“We’ll be reselling a lot of things that contractors would normally just dump at the end of a project,” she said, adding that the store’s April opening is well-timed with the month’s various “green” awareness events, including Earth Day, and spring cleaning.

There are over 650 ReStores across the United States and in Canada, where the first one opened around 15 years ago. Based on how other stores have done, Palermo projected the initial, low-level goal for the West Roxbury outlet is to generate around \$25 per square foot. She said ReStores elsewhere have brought in more than double that figure.

The space was formerly occupied by Gold’s Gym, which worked out well for Habitat, she said. The store wanted an open layout inside and has kept the former workout area’s cushion-y flooring.

Startup costs for the ReStore venture were raised independently from home-building project donations and paid largely through a \$100,000 donation from the



Donated appliances.

(Courtesy: Habitat for Humanity)

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State Street Foundation and \$20,000 from the Fidelity Foundation, Palermo said.

The store has hired one paid employee – a manager. Other positions will be filled by volunteers, which Palermo expects there will be plenty of.

She said there's often a backlog of people wanting to volunteer for Habitat's homebuilding projects in the Boston area. But, for safety and efficiency reasons, only so many people can be working at a construction site. Now, those eager to provide charitable labor will have the option to help out at the ReStore.

"There's such a great volunteer base around here. It speaks very highly of the population that lives in this area," Palermo said.

The Hub Habitat serves Boston and 25 neighboring municipalities as an affiliate of the Atlanta-based Christian organization that builds and renovates affordable homes for families in need worldwide through a mix of donations and volunteer labor. The local Habitat branch said two of its ongoing projects include renovations in Roslindale and Dorchester. Since 1987, the charity has built 100 homes in Greater Boston.

The Greater Boston chapter plans to monitor the West Roxbury store closely to determine whether to open another.

"This is sort of like a pilot, and, if it's successful ... we absolutely would consider opening another one," Palermo said.

From 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. Saturday, the store will hold grand-opening festivities with refreshments, prizes and shopping opportunities throughout the day. Plans include a dedication and ribbon cutting by Mayor Thomas M. Menino, a visit by District 6 City Councilor Matt O'Malley, and music and radio coverage provided by Boston 101.7 WFNX's Henry Santoro.

The store at 1580 VFW Parkway will be open Tuesday through Saturday from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. To make a donation to the ReStore, check the [online list of items that can and cannot be accepted](#), and contact manager Paul Decoulos at ReStore@habitatboston.org, (617) 423-2223 ext. 13 or (617) 327-1170. To volunteer contact: volunteers@habitatboston.org.

E-mail Matt Rocheleau at mjrochele@gmail.com.

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(Courtesy: Habitat for Humanity)

A mix of part-time workers, hired for the renovation process, and volunteers help get the ReStore ready for its opening day.



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