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Consign of the Times: Furniture Consignment Stores Growing in Lamorinda

By Sophie Braccini



Kat Moody (left) and Nicole Berzins in the new Yesterday's Treasures store Photo Sophie Braccini

Nicole Berzins rearranges the objects in the window of the new store Yesterday's Treasures in Lafayette, a store that is part of one of the fastest growing segment of American retail: Resale. Berzins, a Lafayette mom, is a recent hire of Terry Ketchel, the owner of the store that opened on January 5 at 996 Moraga Road, next to the Squirrels Coffee Shop. Orinda's Hilton House, the grande dame of furniture consignment in Lamorinda, confirms that local shoppers love to browse consignment stores in search of a treasure or a bargain; while others, from all walks of life, needing cash or more room in their home, are happy to let go of some of their belongings.

According to the National Association of Resale Professionals, NARTS, resale remains healthy with new stores entering the industry and current establishments opening additional locations, at approximately a 7% net growth a year for the past two years.

"But some are closing too," warns Ketchel, "since the industry is growing, many think that it is the right business to get into, but you also need the right spot and business model to make it a success." Yesterday's Treasures is Ketchel's third boutique; she also has locations in Antioch

and Brentwood.

The stores use a similar consignment system. Owners who want to sell an object or piece of furniture offer it to the store and a price is set. At Hilton House, it remains on display for 45 days; at Yesterday's Treasures, it can stay as long the owner desires, with the possibility of getting it back after 90 days if it has not sold. Hilton House will ask the owner if they want to lower the price after the first period; if the item still does not sale, the proprietor needs to take it back or it will go to charity. According to NARTS, shops pay the owners from 40 to 60% of the selling price.

According to Hilton House, what moves fastest in Orinda are the knickknacks, the silver objects; the small unique pieces that sometimes people have been looking for forever.

Kat Moody, the manager of Yesterday's Treasures, on the other hand, sells furniture faster than trinkets. "We are quite selective with the pieces we take," she says, "we ask for photographs first, make sure that the house had no smokers or cats (for the allergy factor), and on a scale of 1 to 10, where 10 is brand new, we never take something below 8." Moody adds that they prefer name brands and want to create an eclectic mix of styles.

A particularity of Yesterday's Treasures is that they accept layaway for the larger furniture items. "With 25% down the clients can purchase what they want and we work with them on a series of weekly payments, charging no fees or interest," says Moody.

According to Ketchel, she and her employees will go to great lengths to satisfy their customers. They also consult in staging, decorating, and color matching. "It is full service and it is a lot of fun," says Berzins, who started working for Ketchel a few weeks ago at her first full time job since having her two boys, who are now at Stanley Middle School.

According to NARTS, consignment is blossoming thanks to value conscious customers. After all, consignment is the ultimate recycling.

Consignment stores in Lamorinda

Furniture:

Hilton House

21 Orinda Way, Orinda

254-1113

Yesterday's Treasures

996 Moraga Road, Lafayette

283-8549

Chameleon Consignment

1003 Blackwood Lane, Lafayette

299-1994

Collector's Choice Antiques

3574 Mt. Diablo Blvd., Lafayette, 299-9400

Collector's Choice is an antique store. Some of their merchandise is made of consigned pieces. They only accept objects and furniture that are at least 30 years old.

Clothing:

Rosie's Upscale Consignments

1020 Brown Avenue, Suite B, Lafayette

283-6540

Cheryl's Closet

21 Orinda Way, Suite E, Orinda

254-4442

They Grow So Fast

Consignment store for children's clothing

3413 Mt Diablo Blvd, Lafayette

283-8976

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