

Parent Pathways:

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Charity born from loss

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BY CHRISTA GALA

I love to "thrift shop."

I know, it's not for everyone. But I like the excitement of never knowing what you're going to find. And when you find something great for pennies on the dollar - what a feeling! There are a few other feel-good aspects of thrifting that appeal to me, too. You're saving something from going to the landfill (at least for a little while) and the proceeds typically benefit a worthy cause.

So when I heard about the latest thrift shop in Cary, I had to check it out. Located on Southeast Maynard Road is Thrift 'n Gift. The shop is the brainchild of Debbie Dillon and Nicolette and George King, two Cary families plagued with loss within months of each other in 2009.

David King, George's son and Nicolette's stepson, was killed in a car crash in Colorado in September 2009. Born in Raleigh, David spent some of his childhood in Cary and visited often, although his primary residence was in Colorado.

George and Nicolette King first learned of their son's fatal wreck while on a mission trip in the Dominican Republic.

"We were on our first day in the mission field," says Nicolette King. "We came back that night from being out and found out that David was killed."

The family flew home immediately. Condolence calls poured in and people wanted to know if they could contribute to a cause in David's honor.







"Immediately we thought about those kids in the Dominican



Shop founders Nicolette King, left, and Debbie Dillon, right, with Cecelia Walton, the thrift shop's manager.
CHRISTA GALA - carynews.com



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Republic," she continues. "When we were there with them, I remember looking at the lady and saying, 'I have no idea how to help you.' I was overwhelmed by the poverty that I'd seen."

That's how Seeds of Mustard Ministries was formed.

Two months later, loss struck Debbie Dillon as well.

Dillon, a good friend of the Kings, lost her mother. She also steered memorial contributions to the ministry.

In September, one year after David's death, the two families announced they were starting a thrift shop whose proceeds would benefit the local community as well as kids in the Dominican Republic.

Donations began coming quickly and the Kings and Dillon scrambled to find a place to store the clothing, housewares and furniture.

But making the thrift shop a realization was a big headache.

"You are learning everything," says Nicolette King. "You have to learn how to work with the IRS, how to file for nonprofit status, how to operate a cash register. Everything is a learning curve."

Dillon and King were thrilled to find Cecilia Walton as a store manager. She worked for the Raleigh Rescue Mission for 10 years.

Howard Manning, executive director of Dorcas Ministries, put Walton in touch with King and Dillon. He also helped the women jump the hurdles they encountered the past seven months.

Dorcas Ministries is a Cary staple, with 40 years experience and 90 percent of proceeds going back to the community through Christian Community In Action.

"The Dorcas shop has been our inspiration; they've been our help," says Dillon. "[Manning] gave us a tour; he sat with us; he emailed us forms we needed."

With her thrift store experience, Walton has been able to help with questions as well. She's confident the store will be a success and hopes Thrift 'n Gift may one day offer expanded opportunities for those in need.

"I would love to see some of the women in the prison system come through and get some experience - that this could be a vocational rehabilitation setting," says Walton.

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"We did that at the Raleigh Rescue Mission. They can learn how to manage a clothing store, whether it's this level of retail or another level of retail."

The store just opened April 1 but already local churches and organizations have agreed to help. Several YMCA locations and Hope Community Church donate all unclaimed lost and found items. Grace Christian School plans to hold a fundraiser each year to support the Thrift 'n Gift, and Apex Baptist Church continues to offer resources.

A few local artisans have agreed to sell their brand-new items at the Thrift 'n Gift, inspiring the name.

Nicolette King envisions the thrift shop as a just a branch of what she hopes will be a large-scale ministry.

"In the back of my mind, I think about adoption, medical mission trips and more," she said.

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