

## **Goodwill's New Store Gets Down to Business** -Organization Moves to University Avenue-

By Karl J. Karlson  
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An official grand opening of Goodwill/Easter Seals' new store and offices in St. Paul won't be held until early January, but the new operation is already in business a block north of University Avenue at Fairview Avenue.

"Like many retail operations, we had a 'soft opening' to make sure the cash registers and other items worked, but people are finding us," said Elizabeth Anders, director of marketing and communications for the social service agency.

The agency was located at the corner of Lauderdale at Minnesota 280 and Como Avenue for 30 years, operating one of its 14 stores and donation sites. The location was also headquarters for the agency and its 175 employees.

The common image of the Goodwill may be a shelf of cheap knick-knacks or a rack of used but clean clothes. That still exists at the new, bigger and brighter store, but the agency's mission is to "assist people with barriers to education, employment, and independence in achieving their goals."

Anders said the local organization's programs-dealing with such diverse things as English skills and job skills-work with 17,000 people a year.

"While we do provide a service to people who can't afford to shop, say at Target, the purpose is to raise money for our programs," she said.

The stores sell donated items, and the agency also has a program that accepts donated automobiles.

When the agency learned several years ago that the Como Avenue location was destined to be a run-off holding pond for a Minnesota Transportation Department road project, it considered where to go. It ended up buying seven acres, including a bottler's warehouse at 553 N. Fairview Ave. and remodeled the building.

"We recycle, it's part of how we work," Anders said.

The move is costing about \$15 million, most of which has been raised, though Goodwill/Easter Seals is still seeking donations, she said.

"We like being in St. Paul, part of a vibrant neighborhood and on major bus lines, which helps serve our customers and the people we serve," Anders said.

Lynne Dahl-Schraut, assistant director of store planning, said donated items are priced to move, usually from a long price list based on experience of what sells and what it should sell for. The price policy is also uncomplicated.

"Shirts are \$3.99, jackets \$6.99. That way customers know and the cashiers know," Dahl-Schraut said.

Some items may be priced higher and a few select items go into a special "silent auction" shelf. Prospective buyers write bids in a book and, at the end of the week, the high bidders buy the items.

Last week in the new St.Paul store there were two Elvis Presley LPs, some collectable glass and pottery , and a hide drum.

Items that do not sell within two weeks are moved to the soon to be renamed "Goodwill Outlet"- at 2505 W. University Ave., where merchandise is sold at \$1.29 a pound.

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For information about Goodwill/Easter Seals of Minnesota, call (651) 379-5800 or visit [www.goodwilleasterseals.org](http://www.goodwilleasterseals.org).