

Lola's Depot sells stylish and affordable used clothes

by Jacoba Charles

Racks of brightly colored clothing set on the sidewalk beckon shoppers into Lola's Depot, which opened on Sir Francis Drake in Fairfax this spring. Inside is a clean, well-lighted place for previously owned goods.

Though some might see it as a thrift store, Joelle Levy prefers to call her shop a "recyclery" and stresses the importance of organization and aesthetics.

"It's not just about thrift," said Levy, a calm, dark-haired woman with a mild Canadian accent. "I want to attract people who shop second-hand, but I also want to attract people who don't."

The result of her efforts is a compact, two-room shop that is filled to the brim with color, texture and unexpected treats, without seeming cluttered. Racks of men's and women's clothing fill the floor of the main room while organized bookshelves line one wall. Most of the back room holds a collection of children's clothing arranged by age from infants to young teenagers.

All of the clothing is in good condition, and most prices hover around \$15.

Other assorted treasures all have their place. There are sun hats, boas, and blown-glass candy dishes. A corner shelf sports a pile of vintage men's ties in gaudy floral prints, beside a carefully selected collection of knick-knacks. In the window is a case full of rhinestone earrings, necklaces, bracelets and tiaras.

"I collected things for about a year, so when I opened I was well stocked," said Levy, who got serious about her weekend yard sale shopping when she decided to open the shop.

Goods also come from thrift stores or shops that are closing down, she does a little bit of consignment and occasionally people give her things to sell.

Levy said that she has always loved finding treasures, but when she closed her folk art and craft shop called Modern Primitive in Toronto in the early 1990s, she thought that she was done with retail.



Lola's Depot in Fairfax is a recently opened "recyclery" that sells second-hand clothes and other goods. Owner Joelle Levy found her old African doll talisman, which she had named Lola 15 years ago, while unpacking the shop. Photo by Beth Babicz.

"The whole environmental garbage thing became really important to me," she said, describing the excess packaging that her business generated after she began traveling less. "I didn't know where things were coming from, and every time I got a package full of goods there were all these boxes and plastic I had to deal with. That was part of what turned me off."

She began studying the Feldenkrais method of bodywork, eventually leaving Toronto to travel around North America. In 1999 she settled in Fairfax, where she and her late husband raised their son Philip.

"I found I was still a collector," she

said. "But I wanted to focus on things that were already in circulation. This is a power that we have: you can take your money, and you spend it so it lines up with where you're coming from politically and spiritually."

In her store, anything with new tags either was previously owned but never worn, came from excess inventory, or is custom work. She sells some of her own jewelry—wire-wrapped pearls and semi-precious stones—on several racks by the cash register, as well as local artisan crafts.

After she has settled in, Levy hopes to use her store as a hub for additional

resources. She envisions using the shop to host classes, bringing people in to offer instruction on bead work and jewelry making. She also wants to sell more arts and crafts materials such as fabric and beads, so people can do their own thing.

Levy also wants to continue to expand on the retail recycling possibilities for Lola's Depot. "I'm thinking of Legos or Bionicals by the scoop, and bins of doll clothes, so you can just take however much you want," she said. "A lot of toys available for kids are plastic and made in China, but if you can keep the ones already out there going around maybe less will have to be made."

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