

Lynda Hammond **THE GARAGE SALE GAL**



Garage sale to donate

Lynda Hammond

Monica Karels loves buying bargains at garage sales but her treasures we're beginning to pile up around the house. "Yeah, it was getting kind of crowded. I think my family was beginning to wonder about all the stuff and what I was going to do with it," Monica says.

So, the Mesa resident needed to come up with a plan where she could continue shopping garage sales but not accumulate things.

Hmmmm, now that would be a problem.

But she did it. She found a way to keep on buying, never run out of room and help others at the same time.

She opened a small business to sell some things while giving other items to charity. "It's allowing me to shop and feel good about it and it's not costing me a lot."

Monica works for a computer company out of her home and she was tired of being cooped up. So she needed a hobby—something that would get her out of the house. She decided to take up garage saling and began searching for antiques and educating herself on what sells and doesn't sell in the secondary market. She bought so many glass and pottery artifacts that she was forced to find a way to get rid of some of it. So, she opened an antique booth in order to sell some of the bargain finds at a small profit.

With her booth stocked up and her home chock full of garage sale finds Monica, who already mentors two young girls, decided to add charities to the mix. She thought it would be fun to shop garage sales in hopes of supplying charities with anything and everything they could use. Turns out they need a lot of things all the time—hangers, blankets, bedding—but sometimes the charities ask Monica to fill "special orders".

For instance Greater Phoenix Youth at Risk recently needed beach towels for a special event. Monica was able to find some at garage sales and spent around \$1 each towel. Helen's Hope Chest in Mesa wanted kid's clothes. Monica bought pants or tops at garage sales spending no more than fifty cents each. She even found some brand new clothing at garage sales with the store tags still attached.

The charity she helps out most often is Shoebox Ministry of Scottsdale, an organization that fills shoeboxes with toiletries and donates them to homeless shelters. At least once a week Monica is able to drop off shampoo, toothpaste, soap and other items she's purchased at garage sales. She says she feels like she hits the jackpot when she finds a seller unloading part of a business. "A lot of times someone will be selling all their beauty products from Avon or Mary Kay and those are always brand new and never used." She usually pays about \$2 for creams and lotions from the popular beauty lines.

Louise Janzen, with Shoebox Ministries appreciates Monica's garage sale donations and in fact, "welcomes her with open arms". "I am very grateful for Monica's contributions. Without people like her we'd have a lot less. It is the small continuous donations that keep an agency going and they also fill in the gaps that bigger donations don't cover," Louise says.

Monica has turned her obsession with garage sales into a passion for helping others—a way to garage sale guilt-free! "I like it. It feels good. My family's happy because I'm not accumulating stuff and the charities always seem appreciative. It's allowing me to shop and feel good about it."



(Picture provided by Monica Karels) Monica Karels bought this authentic Murano vase a few months ago at a garage sale in Gilbert for \$20.

Talk to the Garage Sale Gal!

Do you have a question or comment about garage or estate bargain sales? Email the Garage Sale Gal: Lynda@GarageSaleGal.com.

Lynda Hammond is a former television anchor who left the anchor desk for the love of garage sales. Contact her at Lynda@GarageSaleGal.com. Lynda also does garage sale segments on local TV stations.

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