Sale helps facilitate fresh starts

By Anne Marie Amacher

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DAVENPORT — In 1989, Gertrude Vogel hosted a garage sale at her home to benefit then-Humility of Mary Housing Inc. She raised $650 that first year. As the sale outgrew her yard, it moved to the Mississippi Valley Fairgrounds. In 2012, the two-day sale moved to Humility Homes and Services headquarters and grew to twice a year sales.

Today, the two annual Fresh Start Benefit sales and recycling income generate more than $46,000, said Patti Trapp, volunteer coordinator for Humility Homes. The money helps fund programs that include outreach, emergency shelter, transitional housing, veterans'
transitional housing, supportive housing and services, rapid re-housing, rent-it-forward, Section 8 Plus, single-room occupancy units and Quad-Cities coordinated entry partnership, among other things.

These activities and programs couldn't happen without volunteers, and lots of them, to prepare for the two sales and to set out items for Humility Homes' clients. “Our volunteers come from all walks of life,” Trapp said, such as Goodwill Day Development Center for people with disabilities, AARP, worker's compensation programs, businesses, school community service programs and court-ordered service. Individuals who have been served by Humility Homes and want to give back to the community also volunteer.

Volunteers learn about Humility Homes and Services, but also about the clients served and what they have gone through in their lives, Trapp said. Larry, currently on disability, worked with Trapp to set up his volunteer hours for the Fresh Benefit sale to be held April 26 and 27. He is limited to light duty, so Trapp offered him options to consider. “We have volunteers with physical issues, varying abilities and more. We will find what fits you best,” she said. Humility Homes is still in need of additional volunteers for the Fresh Start sale.

The day of this interview with Trapp, volunteers pulled up the loading area door, greeted donors and filled carts with donations. Items were moved to the sorting room where other volunteers inspected and decided where to place donations. All items accepted for distribution were tagged with a colorful price sticker. Items were moved to designated departments in the warehouse, which was filled with furniture, clothing for kids and adults, bicycles, strollers, small appliances, houseware, jewelry and more.

Volunteer Marie Hermie of Bettendorf began volunteering about 10 years ago, inspired by a friend. Today she volunteers about 15 hours a week — three hours at home cleaning and fixing items and 12 hours at the warehouse hanging up jewelry and clothing. “I enjoy being here. There is a need out there for good quality items and we have it.”

Paul Bates of Durant volunteers through the Transitions to Work program as part of his workers compensation program. He was a semi-truck driver who was injured and is partially disabled.

When he was told he needed to do volunteer work, he said he wasn't too thrilled. “I didn't think I'd like it. I was used to being independent and on my own. But I have found this to be a good thing and I like helping those who are less fortunate.” He volunteers about 40 hours a week. “I hope to go back to semi driving again but in the meantime, this is a great place to work and I'm enjoying it,” Bates said.

An unidentified volunteer said she began volunteering about a month ago after learning about Humility Homes during an internet search for volunteer opportunities. “I called Patti and there wasn't a waiting list. I came in for an interview, did some paperwork and began my service.”
The volunteer gives about 40 hours a week to Humility Homes and hopes to earn some good references to enter the workforce. Her duties include sorting, pricing and doing office work such as stuffing envelopes.

Clients of Humility Homes shop in the warehouse year-round for items they need, Trapp said. They do not pay for items, but “we make it look more like a store so there is dignity and they can see departments,” she said. Twice a year the doors are opened to the public to buy items.

John De Taeye, director of development for Humility Homes, said a large number of people in the community live paycheck to paycheck. “We serve a number of these people at the sale.”