

The Social Service League

By Callie Byrnes

If you drive by the intersection of 11th and New Hampshire Street too quickly, you'll probably miss the building. The only indicators that you're in the right place is the old Starbucks chalk board sign that marks the donation drop off and the piece of paper on the door that reads, "Lame Entrance Sign." The Social Service League thrift store's temporary new location looks like a mere warehouse on the outside, but what's inside is another story.

According to store manager Jean Ann Pike, the Social Service League is the "biggest secret in town" because they rely on word-of-mouth to attract customers. While the shop sells what you can find in most thrift stores, Pike claims they also come across interesting finds such as old feather boas, used photo albums and inappropriately-shaped cake pans.

"Every day you find something interesting," said Patty Martella, a volunteer worker of 10 years. "There are some beautiful vintage items and great artwork. You can find just about anything. That's the magic of this place."

But this thrift store is more than just a place to find old books and picture frames. The Social Service League is the oldest non-profit service organization in Lawrence. Because they hope to target those in need, the store allows you to choose what you pay for your purchases. It also offers free formal attire for events such as job interviews and weddings.

"I like it because it's cheaper than the Goodwill or the Salvation Army," said Emily Jones, a junior from Lindsborg, Kan. "You can always find good sales and bargains."

Because they offer so many cheap services for locals, including free eye exams and glasses for income-needy children, the store runs completely on volunteer services. Pike stressed that they are always looking for new volunteers who are willing to help and want to add to the atmosphere of the shop.

“The first time I came shopping here, I was so impressed with the way they allowed people to keep their dignity, and how they helped people,” Pike said. “This place gets it. These people get it. I was so impressed, I became a volunteer two weeks after I came to town, and I’ve been here ever since.”