



Shopping Gives Back

MILWAUKEE'S FASHION INDUSTRY INCLUDES A VARIETY OF RETAILERS THAT DONATE A PORTION OF THEIR PROCEEDS TO CHARITABLE ORGANIZATIONS. SHOP SAVVY AT THESE LOCAL STORES TO DO THE COMMUNITY A LITTLE MORE GOOD, ALL YEAR LONG.

BY MELISSA MCGRAW

Nestled in the historic village of Wauwatosa is a new, two-story boutique with a direct connection to a local nonprofit.

Housed in a renovated fire station, Refined's building is owned by Lindsey Draper, who serves on the board for St. Charles Youth & Family Services. Sophisticated women's clothing, accessories and home décor are sold downstairs, and gently used fashions are offered upstairs.

"But our impact goes far beyond our storefront," says manager Cayla Barrette. All sales proceeds support the St. Charles Youth Employment Services program to provide job training and experience for at-risk youth. Behind-the-scenes, participants learn skills that will help them become independent.

With Barrette's retail experience and fashion expertise, "I help people and do what I love, and our customers are able to give back while they shop," she says.

On your next visit to the Milwaukee Art Museum, peruse the Museum Store guilt-free, knowing that "Every purchase supports our exhibitions, programs and our mission to present art and education to the community," says Donele Pettit-Mieding, the store's marketing manager. "We also make a concerted effort to support local artists."

The Museum Store has close relationships with Reginald Baylor, Chrisanne Robertson and JoAnna Poehlmann, collaborating to create exclusive merchandise inspired by original art collected in the museum. Special store events provide the chance to meet the artists. "We are happy to provide these opportunities for our members and visitors," Pettit-Mieding says.

Patrons of Ruhama's also create beautiful, handmade gifts. Knit, sewn and quilted blankets can be brought to the shop for distribution by Project Linus, a national charity that provides security, warmth and comfort for children in need.

Owner Dawn Slugg says, "Babies and children are near and dear to my heart, and the blankets are distributed locally. I feel very strongly about our contributions staying in this city."

Blush Beauty has similar findings. When auction winners cash in a certificate, many become repeat customers. Some might later hold a VIP party to benefit the organization of their choice.

Blush also donates the time and talent of its artists to charity fashion shows, and featured products of the month benefit various foundations. Custom T-shirts

promoted National Ovarian Cancer Awareness Month in September, and the purchase of Rose Hope Lip Glacé or Bonne Mine Healthy Glow for Face & Cheeks Crème Colour Palette contributed 100 percent of the profits to the Laura Mercier Ovarian Cancer Fund.

Owner Jhousy Leon says, "We help any way we can. It is amazing what a small business can do."

Upscale clothier Aversa has embraced efforts that benefit breast cancer research and awareness. Buyer Patricia Aversa participates annually in the Susan G. Komen 3-Day Walk for the Cure, and a recent percentage of sales event also benefitted the Komen Foundation.

"We are grateful for the support of our customers, and that we have the ability to give back."

—David Aversa

Throughout October, Aversa sold Chan Luu limited-edition "Think Pink, Live Green" bracelets to help raise awareness on the lifestyle and environmental risk factors for breast cancer. For every bracelet sold, 50 percent of the proceeds went to breastcancer.org.

"Business philanthropy is a key component to a healthy and viable community," says general manager David Aversa. "We are grateful for the support of our customers, and that we have the ability to give back."

Specialty Chan Luu bracelets are also available at Faye's, where "Generosity is always in fashion," says CJ Otto, assistant marketing manager.

This October, each Coobie bra purchase contributed \$1 to local charity ABCD: After Breast Cancer Diagnosis, and Green Mitten Co., a "Be Loyal, Shop Local" business,

contributed \$5 per awareness item to the Pavlic Center at Elmbrook Memorial Hospital.

"We believe that the community is where the heart is," Otto says. "Faye's is committed to supporting causes important to our customers, and we spread the love with a different charity every month. Hope is contagious."

You can help Faye's spread the hope this season by patronizing a trunk show, pop-up shop or other fashionable event in support of Children's Hospital of Wisconsin, the American Heart Association, Ozaukee Family Services, the Humane Animal Welfare Society and more.

New-York-based fashion designer John Bartlett also has a soft spot for the furry members of our community. His exclusive partnership with Bon-Ton Stores, established in 2011, includes the John Bartlett Pet collection.

Shop Boston Store for signature accessories that benefit The Tiny Tim Rescue Fund, which supports animal rescue organizations and honors the memory of Bartlett's three-legged dog, Tiny Tim.

Jeremiah Carpenter, the divisional merchandise manager for soft home and home décor, says, "Last year we donated about \$25,000 to the rescue fund. This year we hope to give \$50,000." The "giftable," moderately priced items include toys, blankets, leashes, beds and more.

"Our customers are responsive to these products, especially at the holidays," Carpenter says. "We all have a soft spot for helping animals."

Social responsibility is held in high regard at Susan Haise's Aveda school and salons, the Institute of Beauty and Wellness and Neroli Salon & Spa, respectively.

"We live by the Aveda mission to care for the world we live in. Charitable efforts are at the core of our business," says Lynn Marie Reich, director of sales and marketing.

In the past 20 years, Neroli has donated more than \$225,000. Together, both organizations donate \$50,000 annually. Their charities of choice are ABCD: After Breast Cancer Diagnosis and Alliance for the Great Lakes.

They also support food, toy and school supply drives, participate in charitable fashion shows and supply donations for auctions in the community.

"We are looking to become even more philanthropic, especially with our 20th anniversaries," Reich says. "We want to make an even bigger impact as we move forward."