

The Rummage Room

60th Anniversary
1 October 2024



Sixty years ago, on October 1, 1964, a new shop opened its doors in Old Greenwich. This year that shop is celebrating its continuous success in the same location providing funds that support many worthy missions and charities. Located at 191 Sound Beach Avenue, previous site of a U.S. Post Office and later a hardware store, “the best little shop in town” is well-known as The Rummage Room.

How It All Began

Prior to 1964, The Women's Guild of The First Congregational Church of Greenwich held twice yearly rummage sales at the church. Those one-day events saw every available area of the church commandeered for the display of donated items that had been collected and sorted in "the rummage room." Sale day mornings found eager crowds lined up to buy armfuls of merchandise. The Guild happily made donations to many worthwhile local charities.

However, after the spring sale in 1964, a fortuitous two-fold problem occurred. A large volume of good items remained but the usual "rummage room" storage space at the Church was soon to be used for other purposes. That was when a few enterprising and fearless ladies of the Guild found the vacancy at 191 Sound Beach Avenue. They negotiated a six-month trial lease and a free month to set up shop. The monthly rent that first year was \$250.00. They were the grateful recipients of a donated cash register. The women set about cleaning, building shelves, painting, sorting merchandise and getting ready for opening day on October 1, 1964.

The 1964 Rummage Room Grand Opening



New 'Rummage Room'

"Shown above is the ribbon-cutting ceremony for the new 'Rummage Room' of the Woman's Guild of The First Congregational Church in Old Greenwich, a new venture which opened today. The shop will operate the year round to help support benevolences at home and abroad. It will open every Thursday and Friday from 10 to 5 and Saturdays from 10-1.

Left to right are Mrs. William Fingerle, president of the guild; Mrs. Herbert Miller, co-chairman; the Rev. Francis E. Potter, who cut the ribbon; Mrs. Thomas W. Wright, chairman of the room, and the Rev. Merton Libby." *(Greenwich Time, October 1, 1964)*

The Rummage Room

From the outset The Rummage Room was a success. Barbara Miller and Ruth Wright were the Co-Chairwomen of the project and through their hard work and that of the volunteers the shop was open all day on Thursdays and Fridays and a half-day on Saturdays. Five months later the Guild became The Women's Fellowship and voted to add Wednesdays to the store hours and to hire a paid manager. Soon the days of operation were extended to include Mondays and Tuesdays.

Betty Edgar became Co-Chairwoman with Ruth Wright in 1979. Subsequently, Betty served as Chairwoman and Volunteer Manager from 1985 until her retirement in 1991. Betty moved after retirement and passed away last year. A full-time manager, Deidre Little, was hired in 1992. The shop prospered with the addition of part-time assistant managers and a large cadre of community volunteers. Maria Drieghe and Debbi Stickney became Co-Managers in 2000. They continued to foster the friendly shopping atmosphere and attract willing volunteers who enjoyed the worthwhile work.

Today, Leanne Meyer is the Manager. She has the energy, creativity and managerial skills to keep the shop humming and the donations and sales increasing through the years. The Rummage Room would not be the same without her. She sets the tone that enables all volunteers to enjoy their service and fellowship with the other volunteers and the paid staff.



Barbara Miller



Betty Edgar



Ruth Wright

Volunteers

The shop never could have started and could not function today without the many volunteers who each donate a few hours a week to help run the shop. These volunteers come from the community at large as well as the church membership. All know that they are contributing to a good cause and enjoy a sense of service and camaraderie with other volunteers and the paid staff.

The Rummage Room at Sixty

We celebrate six decades of stunningly successful operation of The Rummage Room, an Old Greenwich village institution. Today The Rummage Room is a model for area not-for-profit thrift shops. Professional Manager, Leanne Meyer oversees the operations from donations through sales. She supervises four part-time assistant managers and a roster of approximately 30 dedicated community volunteers.

The award-winning display windows that are created throughout the year are enjoyed by the entire Old Greenwich community. Using donated items, the windows range from formal attire and wedding gowns to Halloween costumes, back-to-school, and theme designs that represent all the holidays of the year. The volunteers and staff are fun-loving too. Check out the windows on April Fool's Day to spot some live models!

Where Does the Money Go?

Oversight for the shop and staff is handled by a committee of The Women's Fellowship of The First Congregational Church of Greenwich. The committee meets monthly with the manager to map strategy and offer support. The treasurer of this committee monitors all the income and operating expenses, including rent and payroll. Meanwhile, The Women's Fellowship Allocations Committee studies a long list of worthy local, national and international charities and recommends where to allocate the funds each year. With priority given to women's and children's causes, the final list is presented and voted on each spring by the women of the church. A list of these charities is kept in the shop for interested customers. The Rummage Room reports that a total of about 6 million dollars has been given to charities over its sixty years of operation. On average, current allocations total approximately \$140,000 per year.

The Rummage Room



*L to R: Assistant Managers Janet Blasberg and Liz Gustavson;
Manager, Leanne Meyer;
Assistant Managers Betty Shopovick and Pat Deacon.*

The Future

The Rummage Room will continue to offer well priced, nicely broken-in clothing and household items. The management and staff are friendly and helpful and the volunteers are unfailingly cheerful. It is a happy place to browse and shop and volunteer. The Rummage Room always welcomes new volunteers who are willing to devote two to four hours a week. A final note: clothing and other donated items should be clean and fit for a friend to buy. A visit to The Rummage Room is a must the next time you are in the village of Old Greenwich.

Here's to the next 50 years!

The Rummage Room

191 Sound Beach Avenue
Old Greenwich, CT 06870
203-637-1875

Committee Chairwomen

1985-1992	Betty Edgar
1992-1993	Marcia Wilson
1993-1994	Betty Bonsal
1994-1995	Elen Sotzing
1995-1996	Mary Ferry
1996-1997	Jay McKenzie
1997-1999	Mary Jane Penwell
1999-2000	Betty Woodman
2000-2001	Barbara Norrgard
2001-2002	Nancy McConnell
2002-2003	Alice Ell
2003-2004	Marcia Livingston
2004-2005	Beth Rollins
2005-2006	Irene Savage
2006-2007	Janet Blasberg
2007-2009	Ginny Breismeister
2009-2011	Judy Miller/Judy Chapman
2011-2012	Barbara Norrgard
2012-2014	Prill Meyer/Persis Alden
2014-2015	Marcia Livingston
2015-2018	Judy Miller
2018-2020	Sherry Myer
2020-2023	Nancy York
2023+	Ginny Breismeister/Mariann Ekernas