

Good Shepherd exits thrift

Via of the Lehigh Valley will take over its Lower Nazareth Township store.



Wanda McCaulley of Allentown tries on earrings as Evette Figueroa, assistant manager of Via of the Lehigh Valley in Allentown assists. Via is expanding its thrift store operations and taking over a store Good Shepherd is closing. (RICH SCHULTZ, Allentown Morning Call / May 9, 2008)

By Melanie A. Hughes | Of the Morning Call

May 12, 2008

Good Shepherd Rehabilitation Network, which has been selling used clothing and other goods for 25 years, is getting out of the thrift store business and turning its operations over to Via of the Lehigh Valley, an agency that serves children and adults with disabilities and runs its own thrift stores.

The move means the closing and shuffling of sites and store names. Good Shepherd's two Allentown stores either have closed or will shut down. Its Lower [Nazareth](#) Township site will become a Via store.

Meanwhile, Via has opened a new store in the Parkway Shopping Center in Allentown, bringing its own store total to four in the Lehigh Valley.

Leighton McKeithen, Good Shepherd senior vice president, said trustees decided to get out of the thrift store business because it really didn't have anything to do with the hospital's mission of caring for people with disabilities and training them for jobs.

"The thrift store is more of a core operation for Via. Health care is our core operation," he said.

He said Good Shepherd got into the thrift store business as a way to raise money to support its mission and give clients a place to work. But he says Good Shepherd's Work Services Division, which provides job training, stopped placing clients in thrift-shop jobs long ago, preferring instead to find them work in companies throughout the community such as Walgreen, Kraft Foods and PPL.

Via offers a similar program, training and placing people with disabilities with jobs in the community. Lisa Walkiewicz, Via communications director, said Via uses proceeds from its thrift stores to fund its efforts.

She said taking over Good Shepherd's thrift store operation meshes with her agency's goals to expand its store sites.

"We've been expanding for about a year, so this fits in with our plans perfectly. [Good Shepherd] already had a great donor base," she said.

As part of the deal, merchandise from Good Shepherd's two Allentown stores will be

Article tools

E-mail

Share

Print

Reprints

Post comment

Text size:

transferred to Via. Some of Good Shepherd's equipment, including donation bins, balers, fork lifts and trucks, will be purchased by Via.

All Good Shepherd store employees who want to continue to work in the thrift business have been offered jobs with Via, according to McKeithen.

McKeithen said Good Shepherd is encouraging its donors to support Via by bringing donations to its stores or dropping them in its bins.

The change means Via will now operate four thrift stores. They include:

Its original shop at 1401 Broadway, Fountain Hill.

The boutique it opened last year in the Westgate Mall in Bethlehem.

The store it opened three weeks ago at 1583 Lehigh St., Allentown.

The Good Shepherd store at 859 Nazareth Pike, Lower Nazareth Township, that it will take over.

Good Shepherd's Lehigh Street site closed in April and will remain a Good Shepherd property to be used for another purpose. The RePlace store on 26th Street in Allentown is open but is slated to close by the end of June.

melanie.hughes@mcall.com