

U F F - D A !

Useful Facts and Figures - Data for Affiliates!

July 2009

Minnesota ReStores - Part 2!

This month's UFF-DA! Report is the second report on ReStores brought to you by Minnesota's Statewide ReStore VISTA, Mary Zimmermann. This edition highlights product related issues including procurement, marketing and best sellers! Currently, there are 10 ReStores in MN which is close to the national average – 29 out of 48 states have 10 ReStores or less. National ReStore numbers are on the rise with 653 ReStores present in 48 states.

Where Does Product Come From?

As Chart 1 illustrates, the source of product can vary greatly among ReStores! For half of the MN ReStores, the majority of the product comes from individuals in the community. Primarily, this is due to word of mouth marketing. As each ReStore becomes more established and the word spreads, more individuals donate. Notably, the Twin Cities ReStore receives the majority of their items from businesses. So as not to compete with the Minneapolis ReUse Center's recycled building materials, the Twin Cities ReStore focuses on new and like-new product sourced from local businesses.

In certain geographic areas, deconstruction is a very viable option – nationwide, 26% of ReStores participate in deconstruction. In the Brainerd Lakes Area, the ReStore started because of several contractors looking for a place to bring building material items received from residents remodeling their lake homes. Having a wealth of shoreline and lake home property, it only made sense to start a deconstruction program. Grand Rapids and Bemidji are also developing successful deconstruction programs by actively seeking out projects and being on the forefront of local contractors' minds.

Two MN ReStores also purchase some product for resale – nationwide, 22% of ReStores purchase product for resale. The intention of purchased product is to complement the donated products, such as paintbrushes to accompany donated paint. Habitat International recommends purchased product not exceed 15% of sales.

Chart 1 - Where Does Product Come From?

ReStore	Individuals	Businesses	Deconstruction	Purchase for Sale
Austin	95%	5%	0%	0%
Bemidji	40%	35%	25%	0%
Brainerd	25%	5%	70%	0%
Grand Rapids	70%	20%	10%	0%
Mankato	80%	15%	5%	0%
Moorhead	70%	10%	0%	20%
Twin Cities	10%	70%	0%	20%
Winona	40%	60%	0%	0%

* Percentage of # of Items Contributed and Purchased (estimated)

ReStore Marketing

ReStores use a wide variety of ways to market store sales, procure product and seek volunteers. ReStore partnerships lead to free speaking opportunities or booth space, business sponsorship of magazine or newspaper ads and positive free press at local TV and radio stations. ReStore personnel host or attend popular events that fit with the ReStore mission such as Earth Day. Stories about volunteer service and the environment (anything “Green!”) are popular topics and gain a lot of media attention. Finally, as the Internet connects more donors and customers, social media and other websites are an inexpensive and effective way to advertise ReStore product and request new or specific product. Winona updates their Facebook “status” daily to advertise new product resulting in new customers. Lakes Area ReStore has sought and received several great donations through Craig’s List – once the Craig’s List sellers know about the ReStore, they donate instead of selling!

Chart 2 - Sampling of Marketing Techniques of MN ReStores

Partner Organizations	
•	Builder’s Association
•	MN Pollution Control Agency
•	Realtors Association
Events	
•	America Recycles Day or Earth Day Celebrations
•	Contractor's Breakfast
•	Dodge the Dumpster challenge w/local colleges just before the semester ends
•	Home and Garden Shows
Web	
•	E-mail Blast/e-Newsletter
•	Facebook / MySpace (Social Media)
•	Flickr - photos of new store items
•	HFH Affiliate Web Site
Print	
•	Ads/Flyers in Public Utilities Bills, City Permit packets, Builder’s Assoc. Newsletter, etc.
•	Business Sponsored Advertisement
•	Mailing to Rental Property Owners
Media	
•	Local News Channel or Radio Station Feature or Human Interest Story
•	Newspaper articles in Home Improvement or "Green" Sections

What Sells? (And What Doesn’t!)

While each market area is different, there seem to be common themes for best selling items. The six items listed in Chart 3 are top sellers at every single MN ReStore! These items are expensive to purchase brand new and are often sought out by ReStore customers. Overall **worst sellers** include molding, wallpaper, bathroom sinks and toilets, electrical supplies, HVAC, window treatments, hardware, siding and roofing.

Chart 3 - Best Sellers at MN ReStores

What are the Best Sellers?	% Range of Total Sales	% Average of Total Sales
Cabinets	11% - 14%	14%
Furniture	7% - 25%	12%
Flooring	5% - 25%	10%
Doors	7% - 16%	10%
Appliances	5% - 14%	9%
Windows	5% - 13%	9%

MN ReStores Operations Manual Template Available!

The statewide VISTA has compiled documents and information to create the 2009 Operations Manual template for MN ReStores. The Operations Manual is available on CD and includes such things as critical Operations Policies and Procedures, Safety Guidelines, a Volunteer Manual, Pricing Policies, Sample Ads/Newsletters, Sample Budgets and Sales Reports and a form for just about everything! The Manual may be especially helpful for affiliates thinking about starting a ReStore. Please contact Mary Zimmermann (mary.zimmermann@lakesareahabitat.org) for a copy of the CD.

Habitat for Humanity of Minnesota
 2401 Lowry Ave NE, Suite 210 • Minneapolis MN 55418
 877-804-3466 (phone) • 612-789-0846 (fax) • www.hfhmn.org