



A periodic look at how members of FUMC Delmar are putting their faith to work

# MILESTONES

First United Methodist Church of Delmar

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## *TREASURE COVE:* From a simple idea, it's grown to provide more than 15 years of service to our community

In the fall of 1992 Ross Perot was pulling out of the Presidential race, Florida was recovering from Hurricane Andrew, and the Internet wasn't yet a household word. Also at this time three FUMC women agreed that there was a need for a thrift shop in our community.

These three women – Pauline Geurtze, Dot Hasselbarth, and Jeanne Herrmann – had a vision of a place to give clothing to those who need it, to recycle clothing and goods, to sell at affordable prices, and to turn over the proceeds to the Church. The ladies then proposed their dream to Rev. Arthur Hagy, who encouraged them to try it out for a year.

They then invited five other charter members to assist with planning and implementation: Irma Crouse, Sally Gazzetta, Dot Kelly, Barbara Lindell, and Jean Pelham.

“We lived through the Great Depression,” recalls Jean Pelham in her interview with Milestones, “so we knew what real hardship felt like, and we wanted to use the Church as a way to reduce hardships for others.”

When the Treasure Cove first opened for business on September 8, 1992, offering “gently used” clothing, there were concerns that donations wouldn't be sufficient or that few shoppers would visit. How little we knew then! The Treasure Cove has grown tremendously, becoming an important

source of support for those in need and a significant portion of Church revenues as well.

Shoppers come from all over Albany County, including the Hill Towns, and also from Greene and Schenectady Counties. Treasure Cove hasn't advertised in years, relying on word-of-mouth and a street sign to bring in the crowds. All are greeted by soft classical music.

Customers are all ages, backgrounds and income classes – waitresses, house cleaners, lawyers, grandparents looking for winter wear for visiting grandkids, bargain hunters of all kinds, and most importantly, those in need. Treasure Cove

receives referrals from other churches and community organizations – for example, a family that lost their home to fire – and these customers shop free of charge. Jean Pelham says that the gratitude of these customers can be overwhelming for them, sometimes to the extent that they have trouble expressing their appreciation.

Treasure Cove sells more than just clothes. Also for sale are books, magazines that contain recipes, jewelry, handbags, shoes, boots, knick knacks, and toys. Donations come in from all over the community, some from FUMC members but much of it from outside the Church. Valuable jewelry donations are sometimes sold by a local jeweler on consignment.

Special times for Treasure Cove customers are their end-of-season half-price sales and, for the ultimate bargain hunters,



Crewmembers at their 15th anniversary luncheon

Milestones appears from time to time to showcase the ways FUMC is in ministry. If you have a suggestion for a topic we should cover, please contact Stephen Rice at 439-2629 or [ricesw@hotmail.com](mailto:ricesw@hotmail.com).

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A busy — but fun — place to work.

## Treasure Cove: going strong at 15

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an occasional dollar sale. These lively sales help reduce inventory that would otherwise have to be maintained for a year. In this fast-paced retail environment, Treasure Cove volunteers learn quickly to leave their personal items in the Choir Room. As Jean points out, “If you leave something in the sales area we will sell it! Once we sold a pair of gloves belonging to one of our sales people! Fortunately we were able to track down the buyer and set things straight.”

One of the great — and somewhat unexpected — benefits of Treasure Cove has been the personal bonds that have formed between customers and volunteers. Many customers come every week, while others stop by frequently. Customers share sad news, such as cancer treatments and the passing of spouses, or might mention that the free candy kisses are serving as their breakfast that morning. Happier times are also shared — marriages; the joys of children and grandchildren; even the latest on the family pet.

Children are special guests at Treasure Cove, and they often receive a free toy or book. Halloween costumes and the supplies to make costumes are a special offering for kids and their families. Regular customers may find that a “something special” they have been looking for has been “set aside,” waiting for their next visit.

Not all Treasure Cove customers are individuals. School groups get free clothes for plays, while community theater groups and nursing homes often purchase clothes. A new

niche is vintage clothing — hats, shoes, etc. — that is drawing antique dealers. Treasure Cove also donates to charitable organizations like the Orphan Gravy Train, the Upton School, and the RPMs’ midnight runs to New York City. Here are excerpts from two of the many letters Treasure Cove has received from grateful organizations:

*“Refugees come often with little more than the clothes on their backs... The time you spend in sorting clothes and making them available to the refugees program is a real gift and demonstration of your willingness to “welcome the stranger” (Matthew 25).”*

— Refugee Resettlement Program

*“...you have made somebody’s life a bit better tonight. We were concerned about not having enough to give; however, with your help we can help warm more than 45 extra people that we wouldn’t have been able to on our own.”*

—A Worker for the homeless of New York City

Treasure Cove operates from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. almost every Tuesday of the year, closing only for bad winter weather, a major church event such as a funeral or Fall Fair set-up, or a major holiday. During the warm weather months Treasure Cove benefits from customers attracted by the farmers’ market in the church parking lot. On a typical Tuesday setup begins about 9:00, followed by a flurry of customers when the doors open. Things tend to slow a bit in early afternoon, and then the after work crowd flows in from 4:00 until closing. Take-down then runs another hour.

To be sure, Treasure Cove is hard work but it also brings great rewards, with faith-building at the top of the list. Jean sums it up nicely: “When you help people there’s a great reward.” This help is even more important in a slowing economy, when their customers are looking to stock up on cheaper items, while unfortunately passing on the more expensive winter coats.

But working at Treasure Cove is also great fun. Of course there are the lasting friendships. On occasion, memories stirred by certain vintage items inspire the staff to break nostalgically into song from an earlier era. And as you may have suspected, Treasure Cove volunteers are also occasional Treasure Cove shoppers! Jean still enjoys wearing a Mickey Mouse sweatshirt she bought some years back.

Come join the fun! If you would like more information on Treasure Cove, or want to volunteer, please call Jean Pelham at 439-4495.