



Crowded Closet

MCC THRIFT SHOP



MCC Thrift celebrates 50 years: Donated goods turn into global relief

In 1972, the first MCC Thrift Shop opened in Altona, Manitoba, a vision of four local women selling mostly clothing. They expected it would last just three to six months. They never dreamed it would be the beginning of an important legacy that is the work of MCC Thrift Shops, now celebrating 50 years of supporting relief and development programs of Mennonite Central Committee (MCC).



The first MCC Thrift Shop, 1972

Prior to the first thrift shop opening, MCC shipped secondhand clothes to partners all over the world. Leadership later determined that the money spent on shipping would be better spent buying items locally at a fraction of the cost. What developed from this call to change is a network of more than 85 shops across Canada and the United States, including Crowded Closet that opened in 1978, that generate millions for MCC programs locally and globally. To date, the network has contributed more than \$250 million, including \$8.4 million from Crowded Closet.



Crowded Closet founders, 1978

This legacy of giving is built upon the mission of MCC to “share God’s love and compassion for all in the name of Christ by responding to basic human needs and working for peace and justice.” Through the years, volunteers, donors, and staff have worked faithfully to love their neighbors around the world through generous local service. It is truly a legacy to be celebrated! Thank you to each one who has been a part of it!

Today, the popularity of thrift shops continues to grow as people look to live more sustainable lifestyles. To encourage eco-friendly living and celebrate this anniversary milestone, MCC Thrift is launching its “Thrifty 50 Challenge.” Participants will receive a weekly sustainability challenge for 50 weeks, plus a chance to win weekly MCC Thrift gift cards. For more information and to sign up, go to thrifty50challenge.org.



Recycled rugs give textiles new life

365 spools hang on the wall, a complicated web of strings intertwine with strips of fabric to create something new, strong and durable. These recycled rugs are fashioned at the hand of Doris Redding and are now available for sale at Crowded Closet.



The process begins with the denim, wool and corduroy fabric of recycled clothing sourced from the Closet which Redding cuts into strips and sews together. She learned the ancient warp and weft weaving technique in 1994, from Bruce Hochstetler who was making rugs for the Closet at that time. Her loom is also an upcycle masterpiece—made of new materials and recycled parts such as gears from a manure spreader, drainage tile tubing, old heddles from a weaver in Amana—all designed and manufactured by her husband and son.

To date, she has crafted 5,810 rugs and yours could be next! Stop by the Linens Department to check out the selection.





Changing lives locally and around the world. Shop. Donate. Volunteer.

New vendor featured in Fair Trade Shop

"We believe that together we can create a better world for people and the planet through fair and sustainable trade."



Ganesh Himal Trading is the most recent addition to the list of vendors featured in our fair trade gift shop. Their products are trend forward and sustainably minded. Crowded Closet is currently working with their makers in Nepal, to customize a Crowded Closet cotton, silk reusable tote bag. The makers will take our multi-color design and apply each color by hand, layer by layer.

Stay tuned for the final product coming this summer and make sure to get your customized tote while supplies last.



Check us out on:    

Volunteer Spotlight

When Leslie returned to Iowa City after retirement in July 2021, her sister, a lifelong Iowa City resident, recommended volunteering at Crowded Closet. Leslie started at the Closet in early fall and liked it immediately. After her initial tour, she was shopping and a volunteer approached, and said, "We love it here." That endorsement spoke highly of the culture.

Leslie serves between Donation Receiving, Specialties, and Adult Clothing and enjoys the versatility and variety. Leslie says, "In those roles, I have worked with and have come to know a number of great people. It feels like the volunteers each have a niche, and that is very engaging. There is a comradery, and everyone is working towards a common goal in their own unique job."



She values the multiple impacts of Crowded Closet. Not only does the revenue from sales provide relief and service to those in need, it also serves a very important function locally in repurposing items that would otherwise be wasted and unavailable for reuse. Leslie reflects, "The Closet is good for the environment, the donors, the customers, the volunteers, the community and beyond." Join service by visiting crowdedcloset.org/volunteer.