

Findables store reopens to raise funds for Klamath Basin youth

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Assistance League of Klamath Basin President Patty Barsalou, left, ALKB Vice President of Marketing and Communications Kathy Roberts, center, and Vice President of Philanthropic Programs Linda Hartenberger stand inside the Findables store.

Assistance League of Klamath Basin volunteers are working to fulfill their mission of “transforming the lives of children through community programs” even as the COVID-19 pandemic presents some added challenges to their work. One recent bright spot in the nonprofit’s operations was the re-opening of its used furniture and home décor store, Findables, which brings in approximately 50 percent of its fundraising monies to help area youth, according to ALKB President Patty Barsalou.

Findables closed temporarily in March due to COVID-19 restrictions but reopened June 18. The store accepts donated furniture and household items in decent condition. The same items are also accepted on consignment; the profit on consignment items is split 50/50 between Findables and the customer if an item is sold.

ALKB recently began advertising items for sale at Findables on Facebook marketplace, which has proven particularly effective. Barsalou shared, “The furniture is going out faster than I’ve ever seen.” Items are sold on a first come, first served basis and can only be paid for over the phone if the customer views the item in-person first.

Members of the public are encouraged to wear masks while shopping. Masks and hand sanitizer are available in the store, and a piece of plexiglass is set up at the checkout counter.

Assistance League of Klamath Basin has been serving the area’s youth since 1986. It runs three philanthropic programs — Families in Crisis, Project USA and Operation School Bell — each with a unique purpose.

Assistance League programs

Through Families in Crisis, ALKB has become involved with Exodus House, a temporary shelter for homeless and runaway youth established by Integral Youth Services. Over the past year, ALKB has provided books and clothing to Exodus House. ALKB chapter members also donate hygiene and laundry items which are delivered monthly.

Project USA has allowed multiple local elementary schools to benefit from a map of the United States being painted on their school's playground. ALKB donates the paint as well as brushes and rollers, and loans the map stencil to the school so the map can be completed. Two stencils are used to make the map, each of which weighs approximately 70 pounds. The map is a great educational tool and teachers have reported that their students love using it.

For children in the Basin in need of new clothes and shoes, ALKB offers Operation School Bell, which volunteers noted is ALKB's biggest project by far. Typically, the program involves in-store shopping events for youth. Due to restrictions this year, however, students will be given gift certificates to shop on their own time rather than participating in big group shopping events.

Operation School Bell begins in September and ends in March. The program served 930 students last year; ALKB expects this year Operation School Bell will benefit over 1,000 local youth.

Money to fund Operation School Bell is raised through events held by ALKB, including its Christmas Jubilee, as well as through Findables, donations and grants. The Christmas Jubilee is the nonprofit's largest fundraising event; it also had to be canceled this year due to COVID-19. ALKB is planning to hold a different event in its place, the details of which are still being determined.

ALKB also accepts donations from the public for Operation School Bell. It costs approximately \$125 to clothe one child. The program supports children in approximately 20 elementary, middle and high schools all over the Klamath Basin.

In recent years, ALKB added another segment to Operation School Bell involving Stearns Elementary School's "Active Shoes = Active Bodies" program. Established by Stearns physical education teacher Brandon Powell, the goal of the program is to provide quality athletic shoes for Stearns students to improve their participation during PE, increase the amount of physical activity they engage in, and boost their self-worth.

Teachers work with students to write down attainable goals to "earn" a \$40 shoe certificate. ALKB raises money to pay for the certificates which are used at Big 5. The store makes sure students get quality shoes at a low price.

Learn more

ALKB is part of the National Assistance League and is registered with the Better Business Bureau. It can also be found on GuideStar.

Barsalou, who has volunteered with ALKB since 2015 and took over as the chapter's president in June, encourages people to research ALKB through BBB or GuideStar. "We can stand up to scrutiny," she said confidently.

The Findables store is located at 1330 E Main Street in Klamath Falls. More about Assistance League of Klamath Basin can be found on Facebook.