

Community spirit behind sales at St. Patrick's Bookstore



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Patricia DeMarco can be having a rotten day on her way to work. But once she gets to work, switches on the lights, turns on the inspirational music and helps her first customer, troubles are all but forgotten.

"And every customer you help after that, it's just a better day and a better day," said DeMarco, manager of the nonprofit St. Patrick's

Bookstore in Northland Mall, Appleton. "It's a great reward to know you have a job where you can help one person one day and 10 people the next. It makes you feel good and makes you feel like you're making a contribution. And maybe that person is going out and making someone else feel good."

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Post-Crescent photo by Kirk Wagner

PATRICIA DEMARCO, manager of St. Patrick's Bookstore, helps a customer.

If you go

St. Patrick's Bookstore, located inside the Northland Mall, Appleton, will hold a Christmas Open House from 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. Friday and 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Saturday. Local authors Molly Miller and Monica Cops will be on hand to autograph copies of their new book series, "All Things Girl."

ANDERSON: Store benefits community

From B-1

Yes, it's a Christian book and gift store, but you're not going to find staff singing "Hallelujah" when you walk through its doors, said DeMarco, who has run the store the last 10 years. Her mother ran it the 21 years before. "But you are going to know when you walk in there's a certain presence about the store; you can't not feel it. It definitely is a ministry. Our mission is sharing God's good news, and that's what it's all about."

It was St. Patrick's Day 1976 when Irish capuchin priest, the Rev. Timon Costello, got the idea to help fund the two halfway houses he'd started in downtown Appleton — Villa Phoenix and Villa Hope. He decided to open a Christian gift and bookstore. Three months later it was up and running in a small shop on Walnut Street in Appleton.

St. Patrick's Bookstore grew and three years later moved to College Avenue, where it remained until 2001.

When Villa Phoenix and

Villa Hope became self-supporting, Costello decided to share the store's proceeds with the community. "He thought, 'This is going so good let's help other venues in the community,'" DeMarco said. Costello is now retired and lives at the St. Paul Home in Kaukauna.

When the College Avenue reconstruction began in 2001, the store's board of directors knew customers would not be able to get to them so they moved to Northland Mall. Weddings, baptisms, communion and memorials are big sellers for the specialty store.

St. Patrick's board of directors meets every six weeks to go through day-to-day sales, upcoming projects and budget items. During the course of the year, donations are made to churches and schools and recently to Elizabeth Ministry in Kaukauna. The nun's retirement fund, jail

ministry and the Veritas Society benefit every year. If money is left over at year's end, it is sent out to those who have requested help during the course of the year.

Three years ago, DeMarco formed Cash Back for Youth, which any local parish of any denomination can sign up for.

"Anytime a parishioner comes in and makes a purchase, we send 10 percent of their purchase back to their parish to be used in the youth program," DeMarco said. "In any given month (the church) may have \$1,000 in sales, and we're sending back \$100 to the youth program."

"Not only do you buy a gift and it keeps giving to the person it goes to, you gave to the community. It's a warm feeling."

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