

'Trinkets and Treasures' Meet the Khasis

Community spirit grows while supporting Friendship School

By Barb Clagett, East Shore Unitarian Church



For members of East Shore Unitarian Church, it's time to begin gathering up extra household and garage items for the annual Trinkets and Treasures Garage Sale coming in August. We could allow ourselves to feel overwhelmed, considering all it will take to pull off the sale, but then we remember the smiling faces of Khasi children in their plaid school uniforms; the patient and dedicated school teachers; and the proud families and friends of kids who get to go to a school close by, hear and practice a lot of English language, learn songs and dance and work hard to do well on their all-important tests. All the heavy effort we've been imagining suddenly transforms into joy.

The East Shore partnership with the churches of Smit and Kharang is now 12 years old. We also support the first English medium school established in Kharang, Friendship School, which is 10 years old. The school was founded by 2 experienced teachers who were mentored by Annie Margaret Barr (AMB), the determined British teacher and Unitarian minister who spent much of her adult life in the Khasi Hills in the mid-20th century (see the [December 2018 UUPCC newsletter article](#) about AMB). There are 70 children from preschool age through 5th grade attending Friendship School, and our fundraising at East Shore has been paying the salaries of the teachers there. Now we're starting a student sponsorship program for children whose families cannot afford to send them to school.

In the past, we have tried other means to raise funds, but the garage sale (referred to as "T&T") has produced the best results. We have capitalized on the common recognition in our society that many of us possess much more than we need or could ever use. It's become a grand opportunity for our members and friends to clean out drawers and closets and turn the proceeds into teachers' salaries and child sponsorships.



If your church partnership program is interested in creating a garage sale, we offer the following pointers:

1. Develop a team of leaders to head up the sale. At least one person should start 9 to 10 months (or more) before the proposed sale date to secure church rooms for sorting, pricing and then selling items. Designate a place to store donated bags and boxes until sorting begins. Work in partnership with the church staff, listening to whatever concerns they might have. Develop friendly relationships with staff members; be thoughtful and resilient.

2. At least 8 months ahead of the sale, select 1 or 2 people to develop and implement a marketing plan. Again, work with church staff to get the word out to the congregation of the upcoming sale and the need for donations, specifying what will be accepted and what will not.



We have had success using the following donation categories: clothing for all ages, kitchenware, bed and table linens, small household items, gardening tools and supplies, sports equipment, technical equipment, books and children's toys. A special room has been assigned to house more valuable items (e.g. jewelry, paintings, high-quality china or pottery, collectible dolls), and at one time included a horse's saddle!

Marketing to the larger community can wait until 1 to 2 weeks before the sale. We use local social media sites and in nearby neighborhoods put up at least 16 large signs pointing to the church.

3. About 6 weeks out, recruit another 1 to 2 people to begin scheduling volunteers into specific time and date slots to sort, price and sell items. We use SignUp Genius for efficiency and quick communication. Soliciting volunteers can come through church tools, such as the website, paper ads handed out at church or put into the order of service and phone calls. We keep a list of past volunteers available. A total of 6 days are allotted for sorting and pricing using increments of 2 hours for signups throughout the day. We have a presale on Thursday afternoon from 4 to 6 pm for East Shore members only. On Friday from 10 am to 4 pm and Saturday from 10 am to 3 pm, we are open to the public. The last couple of hours Saturday afternoon (3 to 6 pm) are for cleanup and loading cars with leftover items. Usually a church needs to reclaim the rooms for other purposes as soon as possible after the sale.

4. Plan ahead as to which organization(s) might want to take the unsold items. For a price, trucks from places like Goodwill will come and haul it away.

5. Watch excitement grow as volunteers come in to sort, arrange and sell. They see old friends, bring each other coffee and treats and carry on conversations while sorting and pricing. By the end of last August's sale, many volunteers happily stayed until the work was done. Some workers returned without being asked to help load up a long line of cars that were taking what was left to the appointed second-hand store.



Over 60 church members volunteered their time over the course of the sale. By the end of the last day of the sale, the rooms were empty, swept and ready for the next day's RE classes. Last summer's sale was the biggest yet with over \$6,000 raised over a period of just 2 days.

It is a large task we do for all the students and their teachers who physically live in faraway Meghalaya but reside in our hearts here in the Pacific Northwest.
