

10-31-08 Freecycling Is Funner

It's official. I am now a card-carrying member. No, I'm not talking politics. I'm talking about a group dedicated to giving stuff away and swapping and helping to match up those who have with those who need. And the timing for is just right.

I've been slowly cleaning out my house of all the accumulation of stuff that accompanies raising six children. During that same child-raising time period, I also grew from not having enough of most anything (except children) to being able to afford to shop in real stores. Before I could afford store prices, I was totally dependent on yard sales and thrift shops. I couldn't even afford consignments shops.

These circumstances dictated buying for future needs as well as the current ones and buying when I saw those items. This resulted in buying the snowsuit for the following winter when I saw it at the yard sale in summer. I was always storing and labeling and keeping tabs on my stuff. Those practices kept me informed and prepared to buy knowledgeably.

There are actually a lot of fun memories associated with that style of shopping. My children were with me on those Saturday mornings and they sometimes brought a friend. It was always fun to watch the child who had never been to a thrift shop before. Could they even say the word? Little ones usually came up with something like, "frif shop". Their mothers would give them, say, two dollars and they still brought home change! It was a win-win for everyone.

Since you never knew what you would find there, the discoveries were half the fun. Vintage jewelry, frames and furniture were purchased for a song. The gorilla costume has made its way into many a family gathering and will never be given away. Lent out, yes. Given away, no. In fact, my extended family knew that at any time, they could depend on me to probably have what they needed to complete their costumes. Anytime there was a theme party or a parade, it was time to ask Cathy had in store.

In fact, I had so many costume worthy items, I recently thinned them out with a give-away-line at the end of my driveway. After all, how many prom gowns, wide belts, turquoise cowgirl boots or lounge lizard tuxedo jackets does anyone need? So, I strung a wire and hung up a bunch of stuff with a "Free Costumes" sign. There are too many trees in the way for me to see the give away spot from within my house but I can hear people down there. It was so much fun for me to hear them having fun, "Ooh...look at that jacket! That's a riot!" (If they only knew that I used to wear it and it was thought fashionable at the time!)

Knowing his mother, my son recently sent me a link to <http://www.freecycle.org/> When I saw the name, I thought it would be for the free bicycling movement that is spreading to many cities and tourist destinations. It's a great program. Borrowing a bike means you did not have to pack it onto your car, increasing drag and costing more in gas. Riding a bike gives you much needed exercise while away and gives you the opportunity to drink in, breathe in and experience the location in a way you can't in a car.

But it wasn't about bicycles. I checked it out and realized that there are lots of people like me who are willing to clean out but do not want to waste stuff by throwing it in a dumpster. Everything posted on these websites is free and everything has to be appropriate for a general, family audience. I joined the two local groups, Whitman and Hingham. Maybe we can start some more groups in the Wicked Local area. Yankee

thrift old timer ways catch up with the internet age. I'll find out if it really is advantageous to post and list and send and receive emails and photos. Or maybe I will be convinced that my current method of a free sign at the end of the driveway works just fine for giving away stuff.

Speaking of stuff, have you watched Annie Leanard's *Story of Stuff*? It is a twenty minute spell binding story of how we have become a society of consumerism and most of us are unaware of the worldwide price we are truly paying. Some find it provocative. Check it out and let me know what you think.

Reduce, Reuse, Recycle and now, also, Freecycle.

George Carlin, wherever you are, maybe there's a new skit for you here. "All that \*^\*# stuff people collect and they store the stuff and save the stuff and they move the stuff, and, ... then,...then they give the stuff away!"

*Cathleen Drinan is the health agent for the Town of Halifax. She wonders what you do with your stuff? Let her know at 781 293 6768 or [cdrinan@town.halifax.ma.us](mailto:cdrinan@town.halifax.ma.us)*