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Alicia Arney stands with collected items for the children's consignment sale she organizes. The sale is scheduled to take place next week.

Arney prepares for annual charity event

Abingdon mother loves a good find at a good deal

BY PAIGE CAMPBELL
SPECIAL TO THE HERALD COURIER

With just a few days remaining before kicking off her sixth Wee-Cycle It children's consignment sale, Alicia Arney was beyond busy, catching her breath during the hectic errand of picking up clothing racks from several locations around town.

To transform the large empty space at the Woodland Hills Christian Church in Abingdon, which hosts the sale, into an organized venue for selling used children's clothing and other items, Arney and her team need racks, and lots of them.

"We've gotten some donated, some loaned and we've bought some more," she said. "We beg, borrow, basically everything but steal."

Arney, a former event planner, is the creator and driving force behind the biannual sale, which began in the fall of 2008 with a few dozen consignors and has grown to more than 200. Consignors will bring thousands of items ranging from furniture and gear to toys and clothing to the two-day sale, which takes place this weekend.

The effort involved is monumental, but Arney's motivation to see each sale succeed always proves more so.

"Alicia doesn't miss a beat," said Sharon Rowe, the hosting church's ministry coordinator and a regular consignor and shopper. "She always has her long lists of things to

Spring 2011 Wee-Cycle It

Annual consignment sale featuring children's items

» **When:** 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. Friday; 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Saturday

» **Where:** Woodland Hills Christian Church, next to Abingdon Elementary at 16173 Elementary Drive off U.S. 19.

do, and she's totally hands-on but also willing to hear thoughts and ideas from everybody involved."

In fact, Wee-Cycle It depends on a large volunteer base to tackle the tasks of setting up the space, organizing items, checking out shoppers, calculating each consignor's profits, and ensuring quality control; Arney has specific standards for making sure items are sturdy, stain-free and in compliance with safety regulations pertaining to the sale of children's items.

Most of the core group of volunteers first got involved with the simple goal of saving money on their children's clothing, Arney said. "And then they see a bigger picture — that this is about our community making good use of resources we already have."

Beyond this appeal to good stewardship, Arney emphasized the sale supports several charitable causes. Unsold items that consignors choose to donate are made available to school guidance counselors and the local ministry Ecumenical Faith in Action, to distribute to children in need. Then, a large portion

Arney

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of proceeds are donated to Woodland Hills' annual mission trip to the Dominican Republic.

"People know this is beneficial in so many ways, to have a convenient place to buy and sell, and to do something that helps people who are less fortunate," Arney said. "It's a win-win-win."

The idea for Wee-Cycle It came from huge consignment sales the Abingdon native and mother of two attended when she lived near Atlanta for a year. She saw great value in having a well-organized system for parents to buy and sell used, high-quality items. In fact, when her family moved back to Abingdon, she returned several times to Georgia just to participate in one large sale. "The organizers know me as that crazy mom who came from Virginia," Arney said, laughing.

After several years, though, she began to envision such a resource in her own community, and

Wee-Cycle It was born, first housed at the historic Fraley House at Sinking Spring Presbyterian Church, where Arney is a member, and then expanded at the Woodland Hills facility in the fall of 2009.

"I just really like a good deal," Arney said. "And I think bargaining is kind of in my blood. My grandfather was an auctioneer and I used to work auctions from the age of 4 or 5."

The family also ran an antique shop, where her father refinished furniture and Arney grew to love the idea of finding new uses for old things.

That passion, coupled with what volunteer Gina Mittag called "the organizational skills I dream of," has helped Wee-Cycle It grow into a fixture of the parenting community in Abingdon.

"She's so energetic, and so good at recognizing the gifts of others," Mittag said. "We all complement each other, but Alicia is the one that's gutsy enough to bring it all together."