

# Little store with a big heart supports many charities

---

## Betsy Mann

---

“May Court Bargain Box.” The sign over the little shop at 228 Laurier East tells you what you’ll find inside: a staff of friendly volunteers from the May Court Club and lots of affordable items, all in a space that, while bigger than a box, does not overwhelm you like some large second-hand stores. In spite of its small size, the Bargain Box has flourished on Laurier East since 1971. Through the years it has contributed over \$1,000,000 to community charities, principally the May Court Hospice.

In addition to its mission in support of community causes, the Bargain Box plays its part in reducing waste. “Sometimes people just put a lot of stuff in a bag and leave the decisions up to us about what is really useful,” says the shop’s manager, May Court Club member Sandra Ferguson. Is this sort of like “wish recycling,” when people ignore the list of accepted items and put broken plastic toys in the blue recycling bin? Like City workers, volunteers would certainly appreciate it if people always followed guidelines, but they know that not everything in donated bags will end up on Bargain Box shelves. As Ferguson observes, “Even though it requires extra work, our aim is that nothing we take in will end up in landfill.”



## The May Court Bargain Box



### DONATION GUIDELINES

Only donate when the store is open - Tues-Sat 11:30 -3:00PM  
Pack items in bags and limit to 3 bags per visit  
Items need to be clean and in good wearing/working condition

### ITEMS ACCEPTED

Clean women's and men's clothes  
Shoes, boots, sandals and runners  
Unbroken jewelry and watches  
Clean linens for table, bath and bed  
Accessories such as ties, belts, scarves, handbags, hats, gloves  
Housewares such as vases, small baskets, kitchen utensils, cookware  
Both fine and everyday tableware, silverware, crystal and glasses  
Decor items such as small pictures, figurines, cushions, centrepieces  
Books, puzzles, craft items, unused candles, stationery

### PLEASE DO NOT DONATE

Medical devices or medications  
Furniture, electronics or sports equipment  
Food, liquids, make-up or creams  
Baby / children's clothing or toys

Registered Charity 10789854RR001

**Patricia Sanders et Janet Branigan, bénévoles du May Court Bargain Box, sont heureuses d'accepter vos dons et de vous aider à trouver des articles uniques et précieux : vêtements, bijoux, articles ménagers, livres, casse-têtes et bien plus encore. En faisant vos achats ici, vous respectez votre budget, contribuez à la réduction des déchets et soutenez de nombreux organismes communautaires.** *Photo: Betsy Mann*

Ferguson describes what this means for how the store is stocked. "We are open from 11:30 to 3:00, Tuesday to Saturday.\* On Mondays, volunteers spend the day sorting through the donations that have come in during the previous week." She explains that this sorting job involves curating donations while keeping in mind both the store's clientele and its limited display and storage space. What is likely to sell fairly quickly? And what should be passed on to other organizations?

In spite of donation guidelines that stipulate no children's clothing or toys, volunteers sometimes find these items in the bags people bring in. When enough accumulate, volunteers will take them to

an organization like Debra Dynes Family House or the Dalhousie Food Cupboard. Other goods may be given to the Salvation Army or the Sandy Hill Community Health Centre. The Street Outreach Society, which supports the downtown unhoused population, gratefully receives clothing that May Court volunteers set aside for its clients.

If you've been in the Bargain Box, you know that the men's and women's clothing for sale is clean and good quality. "Sometimes we get clothes that are torn or too dirty, and we know that no one will ever want to wear them again," Ferguson says regretfully. "We used to have someone who regularly picked those up for

textile recycling. Unfortunately, we've lost that contact. I'm looking for another outlet to reduce textile waste in landfill."

Whether you've been spring cleaning and have items to donate or you're looking for something to wear to a summer wedding, think of our neighbourhood new-to-you shop. Note: cash or debit only please. Your budget will thank you, and so will many worthwhile organizations in our community.

*\*The first Saturday of every month, the Bargain Box provides the trans community a safe place to shop, between 3:15 p.m. and 4:15 p.m. Call ahead to confirm: 613-235-0333.*