

# Montgomery County Nonprofit Marketing Director Leverages Personal Lessons in Serving Area Charities

When Jo Greenawalt needed a solution for some tough family decisions, there was nowhere to turn. She works every day to make sure that doesn't happen to anyone else in metro Philadelphia.

Greenawalt, director of marketing and charity relations for Montgomery County-based Impact Thrift Stores Inc., recently helped her aging mother downsize her Baltimore, Md., home for a cross-country move. It was a gargantuan task, sorting through the accumulation of a lifetime. To make matters worse, she didn't have a resource like Impact to help her with one of the toughest parts of the job.

"I had a four-day window to get this all done," she recalls. There was no time for the luxury of sentimentality. "The things we have in our lives hold our memories, but you can't always take these things with you in difficult circumstances. The memories attached to those objects are still there, and it's sometimes gut-wrenching to let go."

"At the end of this already grueling process, I realized there was no place nearby like Impact Thrift that I could call, and no truck to haul it away to a secondhand store. So, all those things had to be thrown away. If I'd been able to tell Mom these pieces were going to someone who would give them a good home and the money from the purchase would go to a charity, it would have made it so much easier for both of us."


With a place like Impact Thrift—upscale secondhand stores whose proceeds from sales of donated, gently used clothing, furniture, household goods and bric-a-brac support 17 local charities—recycling these items would have been a snap, because a removal truck is just a phone call away, or donors can drop items at the stores (locations listed at [www.impactthrift.org](http://www.impactthrift.org)). "This way, people in transition can hold onto memories while giving old pieces new life. At Impact Thrift, we're aware of the importance of this. When those items come in, they're handled by people who care about what they mean to our donors. It's not just stuff. We try hard to instill in everyone who handles these items that they're pieces of someone's life."

All charities supported by Impact Thrift directly benefit the most vulnerable population: families and children in need. The organization is faith-based but not religiously affiliated, and has recently pledged support to three new charities.

"We did this because we can," says Greenawalt, "because the public recognizes the value of what we do and our shopping base has allowed us to expand our services."



Now's the time to get our donor base to match that buying support, especially now when so many charities are in need of money."

Her current mission is to keep donated items at a high level of quality. She's building her donor network of move managers, interior decorators and designers, and area women deciding to downsize homes. She welcomes inquiries at 215-699-4146, ext. 103, or [impactstore@comcast.net](mailto:impactstore@comcast.net). 

## Get Organized, Not Overwhelmed

Jo Greenawalt says she wishes more people would realize it's best not to wait and let so much clutter accumulate until some momentous decision must be made. Not only would occasional purging help keep such a job from becoming monstrous under perhaps difficult deadlines, but there's another empowering benefit, a psychological one.

"Especially during this time in history, so much is out of our control. We're losing control of our finances, our military, our government. But in

our homes—our sanctuaries—getting organized can help us maintain a feeling of control over our own lives.

"It's something people need to think about on a daily basis, like getting our mail. We toss what we don't need and keep the rest. We need to deal with our stuff that way. We put things out of sight endlessly, until it all comes falling out of a closet on top of us. You need to make an action item on your regular 'to do' list, to make sure you have the time and supplies you need to organize and put things away when you're ready. If you wait till it's time to actually do the cleanout, you'll be overwhelmed by the task of preparing, much less achieving the organization."

Her strongest bit of advice, when it comes down to the actual purge, acknowledges its most difficult aspect:

"You have to remove yourself from the emotion of what you're doing. Step back and divide everything into three categories – things you're keeping, things you're giving away or donating, and things you're throwing away. Once you've moved something to one of those piles, leave it there. No second guessing; go with your gut on that first choice." She knows all too well how difficult this objective stance is to take in a situation that may be emotionally charged to begin with, since most people don't purge unless faced with some kind of life-changing circumstance. But, she says, it helps to put yourself into "boss" mode: You have a job to get done, now do it. "If you remove yourself totally from the emotion of what you're doing, you can more easily make those decisions or help guide someone else in doing so."