

TOGETHER TONGANOXIE THRIVES

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Good Shepherd offers popular shopping spot while helping greater community

By Shawn F. Linenberger
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Good Shepherd Thrift Shop and Food Bank has served the Tonganoxie community and surrounding area for many years from locations in the downtown area.

Founders of the organization stressed that the organization should always be part of the downtown district, and Good Shepherd has stayed on that path.

The organization started in 1987 when 10 Tonganoxie churches joined together to form the nonprofit organization that assists those in need. Good Shepherd functioned initially in temporary spaces before having a home for many years at what is now Magdalenas at Fourth and Shawnee streets between Tonganoxie United Methodist and Tonganoxie Friends churches.

But in 2015, Good Shepherd moved from its two-level, 2,300-square-foot facility about a block and a half to the east and across the street. Good



Contributed photo

GOOD SHEPHERD THRIFT SHOP AND FOOD BANK has been a fixture in downtown Tonganoxie since 1987. The nonprofit organization has been at its current location the past five years.

Shepherd Thrift Shop and Food Bank has been at its current one-level, 9,300 square-foot space for about five years now at 423 E. Fourth St.

Though the store is open limited days due to the COVID-19 pandemic, visitors can again shop in the store 9 a.m.-2 p.m. Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays. Clients visiting for assistance can visit 9-11 a.m. on those days.

"Right now, the donations have been so wonderful," said Valerie

Francis, Good Shepherd board president. "That is overwhelming."

Some 60 volunteers work together to keep the organization moving forward.

"They're a super good group of people," Francis said.

Visitors are asked to wear masks as of now. The board's next meeting is July 7, so members will assess the situation at that point and determine whether there will be any changes regarding CO-

VID-19 guidelines at the shop and food bank.

"I'm not sure how much longer we're going to do that," Francis said.

The board president said that Good Shepherd did its best to prepare for an anticipated higher demand for food and assistance with economic effects of the pandemic, but said it "boggles my mind" that demand hasn't been higher. Good Shepherd continues to be ready to assist the community as best it can.

"We were geared up for it," Francis said. "Basically we still are."

The organization provides assistance to residents of both Leavenworth and Jefferson counties.

Good Shepherd accepts donations during normal shop hours. The only items it doesn't accept are mattresses, baby beds, televisions or computers. It does accept working monitors.

"We can get some really interesting stuff in," Francis said.

The organization strives to help all residents in need in the two counties, but Francis stressed that Good Shepherd also likes to focus on veterans.

Francis said Good Shepherd also welcomes suggestions for assisting additional groups.

"Someone who has an idea or knows of a need, we would love to have them contact us," she said. "We're always looking for worthwhile programs to support."

"We help with several organizations in the Tonganoxie area."

The Good Shepherd board reviews those suggestions and then determines whether the organization can help.

The shop and food bank operates in the former Pelzl's Do-It Best Hardware and V and S Variety Store, as well as the former banquet room for the former Bichelmeier's Steakhouse. The rest of the former steakhouse now is the Brunswick Ballroom.

Janet Stuke, who coordinates the food bank, said that having the facility on one level as been a great asset, as it is all handicapped accessible.

"That is a wonderful, wonderful thing," she said.

Good Shepherd continues to be a popular spot for shoppers in the downtown area as well.

"I think it has been a good thing, just for all other downtown businesses to have that presence," Stuke said.

For more about Good Shepherd, including updates on special sales and other notifications, visit its Facebook page or call 913-845-3964.

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