

BUSINESS ADVOCATE

From creating over 1,800 jobs and in-store value, to local charity donations, America's Thrift Stores has a far-reaching impact on communities across Alabama.

VOLUME 14 ISSUE 8

*A publication of the
Business Council
of Alabama*

The Reach of Retro

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America's Thrift Stores is "not your mama's thrift store." With over 10,000 unique items refreshed in stores every single day, America's Thrift Stores is an incredible leader in the market with one of the largest donation networks in the South.

Clothing and household items can be donated at one of the more than 2,800 donation sites or 28 storefronts across their five state footprint. There are 60 trucks operating on 175 routes to collect donations, and the team estimates 33,000 home pick-ups each year, as well.

Additionally, America's Thrift Stores provides over 1,800 jobs to hardworking individuals to support the local community while providing quality products often discounted to 70% retail price. When opening a new store, the operation requires skilled and

trained workers to oversee the processing facility, product inventory, and more. There are key roles including general managers and

production supervisors that are critical, and the company aims to develop their own talent internally

to fill those roles when new locations open. Last year, 80 employees were promoted within the company and every single new store was opened with leadership from an

existing store or part of the company. With a focus on professional development, America's Thrift Stores aims to empower team

"OUR GROWTH AND THE IMPACT WE CAN HAVE ON OUR COMMUNITY HAS BEEN AND WILL ALWAYS BE AN IMPORTANT PART OF OUR STORY."



members through monthly and quarterly succession planning, intentional skill training, and strategic identification of high-potential hourly employees to help them grow.

America's Thrift Stores CEO Ken Sobaski believes, "You don't work for companies. You work for people." From employee onboarding to manager promotion, the company's strategy of career development and workforce readiness embodies this approach, and their success proves its truth.

Founded in 1984, America's Thrift Stores is a for-profit company that believes in connecting with charity partners to make a difference in the communities they operate in.

Sobaski shares, "Our mission is very simple: to give back." America's Thrift Stores impact is seen in four unique areas. They give back by:

- **Creating jobs:** Since September of 2019, America's Thrift Stores has added over 500 jobs to the state of Alabama.
- **Providing value in-store:** Their stores clothe children and furnish homes for families across the region.
- **Donating to charitable partners:** America's Thrift Stores partners with children's health and addiction recovery charities in the Southeast

America's Thrift Stores does not stop there - they have set an outstanding charitable goal to donate \$100 million to charity partners over 10 years. Sobaski came to this number by calculating how much they would be able to philanthropically give if the company could double in size. While this may seem lofty, America's Thrift Stores is well on their way to reaching this potential. Since the end of 2019, the company has more than quadrupled its profitability.

This high benchmark serves as the company's inspiration and perspective to work harder and more efficiently to grow the business, and in turn, expand

their giving. In the last four years, they've opened 10 new stores. Additionally, America's Thrift Stores is working to expand the donation network. With more stores and donations, there can be more contributions to charitable giving.

With every donation made to America's Thrift Stores, they give back to their charity partners across the five states of service. Each state has a specific philanthropy partner: Make-A-Wish Alabama in Alabama, Children's Miracle Network in Georgia, Adult & Teen Challenge in Louisiana, Adult & Teen Challenge Midsouth in Tennessee, and Home of Grace in Mississippi.

America's Thrift Stores believes in the value of transparent, collective giving. By making the charity partners focused and pronounced, customers know exactly where their money is going, and hopefully, feel more inclined to give and support the critical missions.

Here in Alabama, America's Thrift Stores has been an integral partner with Make-A-Wish



Alabama in granting life-changing wishes for children with critical illnesses. Make-A-Wish Alabama grants wishes in all 67 counties of the state and has granted more than 800 wishes since its inception as an independent 501c3 in September 2012. Headquartered in Birmingham and locally governed by a Board of Directors, Make-A-Wish Alabama is one of 60 federated chapters of the Make-A-Wish® Foundation of America, the world's largest wish-granting organization.

The America's Thrift Stores team has had the opportunity to sponsor and participate in the wish granting parties and events for several children in Alabama.

In 2020, one young girl made her wish to visit Disney World, but due to the pandemic, she

had to pivot to another option. Her next wish was even more moving and heartfelt – to get a greenhouse so she could garden like her grandmother. The Make-A-Wish team provided her with the new greenhouse and gardening supplies to grant her wish. She showed the America's Thrift Stores team her gardening techniques and tips, and left them all with a deeper appreciation of the “why” behind their philanthropy focus.

Another special wish took place at the Alexander City store, when a seventeen-year-old boy asked for help creating his own landscaping business. With the impactful donations given by America's Thrift Stores, Make-A-Wish provided the lawnmower, weed eater, tools, and even the trailer for him to carry it on. They helped him develop his own brand and initiated the first

steps of business ownership. Mr. Sobaski shared, “It's hard to not be touched and truly inspired when you see the special wishes that these children dream of. The Make-A-Wish Alabama team is truly phenomenal, and it means the world that we're able to play a role in granting these wishes.”

By consistently giving back to their communities in a variety of ways, America's Thrift Stores has played an integral role in countless families' lives. This company is more than just a place to buy discounted clothes – they are growing strong and quickly, equipping their team members, and donating millions of dollars to charities in the South.

“When we grow, our partners grow with us. It gives them the opportunity to grant more wishes or have more money to heal sick children. Our growth and the impact we can have on our community has been and will always be an important part of our story.” **BA**

The Business Advocate is published by the Business Council of Alabama, a non-partisan, statewide business association representing the interests and concerns of nearly 1 million working Alabamians through its member companies and its partnership with the Chamber of Commerce Association of Alabama. For more information on the Business Council of Alabama please contact us at (800) 665-9647 or visit us online at bcatoday.org.