

Designer finds at Goodwill

Bluetique boutique opening in Ponte Vedra Beach

by Karen Brune Mathis
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Starting at noon Thursday, Goodwill Industries of North Florida is taking another step in the world of thrift shopping, including in the heels of Manolo Blahnik.

The nonprofit organization is striding into a world of boutique-style clothing, shoes, purses and jewelry with labels such as Ann Taylor, St. John, Calvin Klein, Juicy Couture, Aeropostale, Chanel and the Manolo Blahniks, along with other well-known clothing and designer names.

The nonprofit, which focuses on job training, raises funds from sales at its Goodwill stores, which are thrift shops that sell donated goods.



The new thrift shop in tony Ponte Vedra Beach is called Bluetique and it features designer and other trendy goods. About 75 percent of the goods sold there are donated to the Goodwill donation center nearby, meaning the items generally are from people in the area.

The other 25 percent of the items are bought from sources that carry close-outs and overruns, said Amber Russo, vice president of retail sales for Goodwill Industries of North Florida.

"Bluetique" is a play on Goodwill's signature color and "boutique." Prices will be at least

50 percent to 90 percent off retail prices, Russo said.

It will be open 10:00 a.m.–7 p.m. Monday–Saturday and noon–5 p.m. Sunday.

Russo and Marketing Manager Amy Koebrick said the Bluetique, in the Tournament Plaza along Florida A1A, is the only one so far in the market and they're not sure there will be more, at least not yet.

The store, being merchandised last week, will be staffed by eight employees and prices will range from \$6.99 to \$350, although some items might carry a higher price, such as the Chanel purse.

"Everything we have here really speaks to our community," Russo said.

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Amber Russo, vice president of retail sales, and Amy Koebrick, manager of marketing, for Goodwill Industries of North Florida. They were the lead organizers of the new Bluetique "designer" boutique opening Thursday in Ponte Vedra Beach.



There's a section of apparel for young men, some carrying a surfer theme.



Dressy dresses for little girls.



The store occupies 5,700 square feet of space in the Tournament Plaza center at 832 Florida A1A N. It offers clothing for men, women and children, including teenagers. Prices generally range from \$6.99 to \$350, although some special pieces might be higher.



Koebrick shows one of the many pieces of jewelry at the Bluetique.



The donated Manolo Blahniks will be priced at \$250 or so.



This Chanel purse was donated and similar ones were found on eBay at \$1,300. The Bluetique prices it about \$800. Russo and Koebrick estimates it sold new in the "thousands."



At Bluetique, 75 percent of the goods are donated and 25 percent are bought from sources selling close-out and overage apparel. The store's offerings will include seasonal clothing, such as for the holidays. It also has a "little black dress" area playing off of Goodwill's national television ads.