

Teachable Moments

by Jenna Richlie, Rainbow's End

When working in Rainbow's End Thrift Store in Monte Vista as a part time job, it is easy to get caught up in the 'business' side of things. Retail work is a series of tasks that need to be completed every day. We sort clothes, we go through donations, we check customers out, we keep the store looking clean, and so much more. As I work to meet the store's demands, I sometimes forget the additionally cool aspect of how all the money we make is going toward furthering La Puente's mission.



One day as we were going through the daily routine, a customer caught my eye. She was in the store with her daughter and they had been swarming around the fitting room like bees on a honeycomb for literally the last hour and a half. The daughter would pop out of the fitting room after raiding the Juniors department and the mom would first check the price, and then the appearance of each of her daughter's requests. After the clothing expedition, they hit every other section of the store critically and thoroughly before finally making it to the check-out counter. The countertop was covered with their items that overflowed into the cart and onto the floor. I began the daunting task of ringing up each item when the La Puente donation box caught the daughter's eye.

"Ohhh, La Puente!" she exclaimed.

"Yes, remember when we stayed there?" asked the mother.

"That's why we're shopping here you know. All the money we spend here goes back to supporting that place we stayed at!" The daughter nodded with understanding.

"We stayed there a few years ago," she clarified to me. "Really great place."

The event passed so naturally that I almost didn't appreciate it;

Yes God will delight when we are 

The Voice of La Puente

once again slipping into the daily grind. However, I was lucky enough to stop and think about just how far this mother and daughter had come. A few years back, they were sleeping in an emergency shelter, and now they were shopping at the thrift store with their own money, buying things they needed for the house they lived in. Additionally, the mom was making a conscious decision to shop at a store where she knew she would be giving back to a place that had once helped her, and she was also taking time to teach her daughter the values and lessons she had learned. This was an awesome experience for me to have shared with them, and even though working in retail is much different from working directly in the shelter or other La Puente programs, it was touching to have seen this progression of someone's life that I wouldn't have been able to witness any other way.

La Puente Enterprises

The La Puente Enterprises include Rainbows End Thrift Stores in Alamosa and Monte Vista, the Hunt Avenue Boutique, and Milagros Coffeehouse. Revenue generated by the enterprises goes to support the operations of our programs. These businesses also serve as a venue to engage the community in the mission of La Puente. Further, the thrift stores provide affordable clothing for low-income families in the community while the coffeehouse puts into action our values of community and sustainability.



Rainbow's End Alamosa



Milagros Coffeehouse

