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## Local Grads Rewarded with Shopping Spree

**NAPLES, FL (May 30, 2013)** – Eight graduating high school interns at Grace Place for Children and Families are looking forward to “popping some tags” during a three-hour shopping spree, Monday, June 3, compliments of the Bargain Box Thrift Store, an outreach mission of Naples United Church of Christ.

Thrift store manager Sandy Goldstein says she got the idea after viewing a news clip about a Utah mother who made her step-daughter wear clothes from a thrift store after the girl reportedly mocked a classmate’s clothing. The concept of using thrift store clothing as a punishment shocked Bargain Box Manager Sandy Goldstein.

“It’s a privilege to buy used,” she says. “Many pieces of clothing in our store – especially in our boutique – were worn one time. It’s not uncommon for us to receive bags filled with labels like St. Johns, Chico’s, BCBG, Michael Kors, and Chanel.”

Goldstein decided to build on the news media attention by giving the concept a twist – turn what some might consider a punishment into a valued reward for some hardworking students. Her mind instantly turned to Grace Place for Children and Families, a long-time community partner and neighborhood center teaching literacy, language and life skills to children and families in Golden Gate City.

She contacted Mary Levine, director of Grace Place’s High School Intern program and invited the program’s eight graduating seniors to take part in the shopping spree.

“These students have overcome significant challenges to achieve educational success,” Goldstein said. “The fact that all of them will be heading off to college or post high school education is truly impressive and definitely worthy of celebration. We hope they will find some items for their closets or dorm rooms.”

From 1-4 p.m., each student will receive a shopping bag and given three hours to shop for clothes in the 5,000 square foot, located at the foot of the Design District on 10<sup>th</sup> Street South in Naples. Even with a \$50 limit per student, the shoppers could score big as the store has a clearance room where most items are \$1. The Bargain Box receives about 600 pounds of new merchandise each day and most of its ladies clothing is priced well below even department store sale rack prices.

According to Levine, the impact of the shopping spree goes beyond clothing and items.

“For these students, it is the recognition of their hard work that is the greatest reward,” she says. “Knowing they have the support of their community gives them that extra boost that will see them through their college years and make them stronger community leaders in their careers.”

Over the past few years, consumer attitude toward thrift store and consignment shopping has shifted, possibly a result of the recent recession. Such stores are now popular with college students and young adults.

“We have a young-at-heart section in our boutique,” says Goldstein. “We’re lucky because most of our donations are from people renovating their homes or updating their wardrobes so the items are not out of style.”

Among the eight students taking part in the spree is Irma Leandre, Golden Gate High School’s 2013 prom queen. Leandre has plans to attend Florida State University and is looking forward to updating her wardrobe and dorm room with merchandise she finds from Bargain Box.

Goldstein says this event is about rewarding these students for being good role models and hopes they’ll appreciate an opportunity to wear fashions that don’t come with a big price tag.

“We’re going to show these kids that you can be both penny wise and well dressed,” she says.

### **ABOUT THE BARGAIN BOX**

Located in the heart of downtown Naples, the Bargain Box thrift store is the longest operating community thrift store in Collier County. The store was established in 1975 by women leaders in the community including members of the Naples Women’s Club and Women’s Fellowship at Naples United Church of Christ. Merchandise at the Bargain Box is obtained through 100 percent

community donations, and all revenue generated from sales goes back into the community. The store anticipates contributions to church outreach in 2012 will reach \$200,000. Over 100 volunteers from Naples United Church of Christ assist in store operations. The Bargain Box is open year round and includes several departments such as furniture, housewares, jewelry, electronics, linens, books, and men's and women's clothing. The store also features an upscale women's boutique. The Bargain Box is located at 153 Tenth Street South, [www.bargainboxnaples.com](http://www.bargainboxnaples.com) or (239) 262-3802.

### **ABOUT GRACE PLACE FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES**

Located in the heart of Golden Gate City, the mission of Grace Place is to be a faith-based nonprofit neighborhood center to break the cycle of poverty by teaching literacy, language and life skills to children and families at-risk in Golden Gate City. Discover more at [www.graceplacenaples.org](http://www.graceplacenaples.org) or call (239) 455-2707.