

Fantastic Furnishings donates profits to Montana Equine Rescue



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The new downtown Hamilton business Fantastic Furnishings was up and running within five weeks.

Owner Cathee Watson-Smith isn't new to the business and was a previous manager at a similar store. She said once she knew what she wanted to do, it was simple.

Earlier this summer, she was walking through downtown Hamilton when she saw the open storefront.

"It was like God tapped me on my shoulder and said you're not done yet," she said.

Fantastic Furnishing opened its doors on July 7.

When she opened her business, she decided that she wanted to help her friend, Shannon Alexander, with Western Montana Equine Rescue.

So after immediate expenses, rent and electricity are paid, the money left is donated to Western Montana Equine Rescue. It is not 100 percent, but it is a lot, she added. However, if an item is donated to the store, they ensure that the money produced from the item is 100 percent donated to Western Montana Equine Rescue.

Alexander said that she has known Watson-Smith for several years and that when she offered the opportunity she was grateful for the offer.

"It has been a huge blessing," Alexander said.

In four years, Alexander has helped over 200 horses and dozens of donkeys find new homes.

Since December 2011, they have taken in 17 new horses, including one that was recently adopted.

Alexander's mission is to help neglected and/or abused equines and their human caregivers by assisting them. She assists in what she can do through education, compassion and eventually a solution.

"I have always been a huge horse person," Watson-Smith said. She said she has been riding since she was 2 years old.

She currently has eight volunteers, including herself, who work at Fantastic Furnishings.

Watson-Smith said she didn't want to compete with other charities or clothing stores, but she wanted a unique and different thing.

"We are not a secondhand store," Watson-Smith said. She said she wanted an environment that was welcoming to everyone and displayed the items in an organized manner.

"A place they could visualize in their own home," she said.

Watson-Smith has her store set up in various designs, with layouts of dining rooms, bedrooms, kitchens, living rooms and more.

The furniture is accumulated from various garage sales, estate sales throughout the Bitterroot Valley and Bozeman.

She said that she often fixes some of the pieces of furniture before it is placed on the floor. Watson-Smith added that before an item is placed on the floor she cleans them, makes small repairs; if it is wood, she polishes, paints or refinishes.

"This is what I do well," she said smiling.

"We have a good time here, there is no pressure, no politics, we just have a really fun time," Watson-Smith said.

For more information about Western Montana Equine Rescue e-mail info@westernmontanaequinerescue.org or visit their Facebook page.

Western Montana Equine Rescue will have a booth at Apple Days on Oct. 6 in downtown Hamilton.

Watson-Smith said her husband was a Vietnam veteran and she offers a 10 percent discount off everything in the store to veterans.

Fantastic Furnishings is located at 175 S. Second St. B in downtown Hamilton. The store is open Tuesday thru Friday 10 to 5 p.m. and Saturday 10 to 4 p.m.

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