

Celebration of old, new at Swap-O-Rama-Rama

Scrap Exchange continues tradition in newly purchased building

By Zoe Schaver
Staff writer

A long, red scrap of cloth and a found mirror wrapped in lights comprised the red carpet centerpiece for an event Saturday, Feb. 15, that exemplified the Durham Scrap Exchange's mission of creative reuse — the Swap-O-Rama-Rama.

In return for a suggested donation of \$10 and their own bag of old clothes, participants could peruse rows of clothing and shoes, then visit do-it-yourself stations to bedazzle, sew or paint their found items, all in one big room at the Lakewood Shopping Center.

"Part of the reason we have so much stuff is we live in this consumer society, and we are trained to be consumers," said Ann Woodward, executive director of the Scrap Exchange.

"So this is really an alternative to thinking that way. There's a lot of lessons in this activity."

Attendee David Goodman said he and his partner Greg Palmer are costuming enthusiasts. Goodman bought Palmer a sewing machine for Christmas knowing his love for the fashion design reality series Project Runway, and now Palmer takes sewing classes at the Scrap Exchange, where the two have shopped often in the past.

At the swap, Goodman found, among other items, a Russian soldier's cap, with which he later marched down the runway.

This swap was the Scrap Exchange's eighth Swap-O-Rama-Rama, with the first one occurring at the Durham Armory in May 2009.

The national model for the Swap-O-Rama-Rama was created by Wendy Tremayne, a yoga instructor and philosophy teacher. Swaps are now held worldwide in more than 100 cities, according to Tremayne's website.

Though the Scrap Exchange has held swaps before, this one was a mile marker for the organization.

The building that once housed the Lakewood Cinema will soon be the new home of the Scrap Exchange.



Heather Cashwell sets up for the day by putting out piles of donated clothes the Scrap Exchange gathered for the event. (Staff photo by Zoe Schaver)

"We have spent 15 years on facility issues," Woodward said. "We have done a lot of due diligence looking at facilities and figuring out what we needed, knowing that we want to own a building."

The \$5,875 monthly rent for the current location at 923 Franklin St. costs \$1,000 more than the monthly mortgage will for the new location.

"It's a thousand square feet more on 2.4 acres, and we own it," she said. "We can do whatever we want here — so watch out!"

Rebecca Currie, the Scrap Exchange's finance manager, said the organization will evolve in its transition and freedom in its new space.

"We've been limited in the past by being in a space that someone else owned that we could only do so much to; we had to work with what it is," she said. "And now we have this possibility to really make it what we want it to be."

Currie said the organization will work on the move with BuildSense, a Durham-based architecture and planning business.

"We know it's going to be a long-term process, so they're going to get everybody together, talk about what we like about our space, what we need, what we want and then help us

imagine it," she said.

In the bigger picture, the Swap-O-Rama-Rama is only one part of the Scrap Exchange's Capital Campaign that seeks to raise \$5 million for the organization.

Scrap Exchange board member Libby Richards said the money would be used for job creation, increased capacity for activities and classes and adding to the organization's endowment fund.

Employee Kyle Knight said his work processing donations at the Scrap Exchange is a dream job come true.

"Everybody that works there is completely family, and everyone that comes in is truly inspiring," he said.

"You never know what's going to come in, you never know who's going to come in, you never know what conversation you're going to have with who. It's never a dull moment."

EXPLORE

<http://www.scrapexchange.org/>

<http://www.scrapexchange.org/calendar/swap/>

<http://www.swaporamarama.com>