

Generations of Service

By: Addison Bumbleburg

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The Student Media class had the tremendous opportunity to visit the Cougar Den, and the experience was more than enjoyable. I would personally call the Cougar Den one of Seymour's hidden treasures after visiting. It is a shame so few people have heard of this resale shop, and students do not realize how big of an impact the volunteers have had on our school. Hopefully, I can do this incredible organization justice and give them the recognition they deserve.

The Cougar Den was started in 2005 by Lula Wolka and her sister. Lula is part of the Zion Lutheran congregation as her husband, Pastor Wolka, was in service there. Her sister had the original idea for a resale shop; she hoped they could raise enough funds to support Trinity Lutheran High School at its early stages.

The sisters searched far and wide for a location for the resale shop and decided on Bob Kamman's pharmacy which had closed recently. He still rents the building out to them to this day for an incredibly generous one dollar yearly fee. Transitioning from a pharmacy to a resale shop certainly brought many hardships and labor, but the community of Lutheran churches offered incredible service. Donations poured in from many congregation members, and after many long nights and days of work, opening day was on the horizon. The resale shop officially opened on April 7th, 2005 to the excitement of congregations throughout Seymour and the students and staff of a young Trinity.

Starting such a big project like this always brings an unknown outcome. Thankfully, this business is still in great shape today, and the founders of it have made such an incredible impact on the school. Just last year, the Cougar Den provided Trinity with a check for \$1,000,000 that had been raised in just three years! This is a very generous donation that has enabled us to continue the mission work of our Lutheran school.

Not only does the Cougar Den raise funds, but it also creates a friendly environment staffed completely by volunteers. The women volunteers are very sweet, and in return the environment is very welcoming. Kaitlynn and I got the opportunity to meet many of these wonderful ladies. What truly made the experience great was learning that each volunteer attended a different church. Mel attends Weagan, Melody attends Immanuel, Viola attends Sauers, and Barbara Shoemaker attends Trinity in Vallonia. These ladies work hard sorting clothing and other items into bins, deciding which items to keep and which to donate to the Orphan Grain Train. Connie Borgman worked the register the day we visited, and she explained she is a retired registered nurse. She said she loves the environment and work the Cougar Den provides for her retired life. She also informed us that she is the Secretary of Trinity's board.

Trinity has a lot to thank the Cougar Den for. The story of this program is an inspirational one, and I hope more students will be excited about this program. Students should definitely stop by and look around at the donated items the store provides, but they can also visit and receive some service hours. Saturdays from 10 am- 2 pm are sadly a short-staffed time for these ladies, and they would certainly appreciate the help. Another benefit would be service hours for the NHS.

On behalf of the Trinity students and staff, I would like to thank the volunteers of the Cougar Den for all the effort they have put into bettering our school. Thank you for the service you have provided for Seymour's Lutheran education.