



Cable Hoover/Independent

Four-year-old Skyler Gray tries to catch up with his mother as they browse the racks of clothes at the Rehoboth Thrift Store in the old Rehoboth Church Saturday.

## Rehoboth thrift shop receives donations from all over

By Katy Barnitz  
Independent intern

**R**EHOBOTH — Light shines through the Old Rehoboth Church's yellow stained-glass windows on to rows and rows of pants, skirts, shirts, dresses and shoes priced to help, not to profit.

The Rehoboth Christian School opened a thrift store in the quaint white church last spring, with the hope of providing nice clothes at low prices — nothing costs more than \$1 — to the Gallup area.

The store only opened in the spring, but has already developed a loyal following. Brenda Esparza and her mother Eugenia Valtierra come to the pretty Rehoboth campus's newest attraction every Saturday. It's an inexpensive mother-daughter outing that they look forward to each week.

"We use it as a Saturday morning ritual," Esparza said. "It's a way to get together. Whether we find something or not."

Esparza and Valtierra aren't avid thrift shoppers, but Esparza said that the Rehoboth store's high quality clothes and clean facility make it a great Saturday morning destination. It's these qualities that Esparza said make the shop such a great resource for Gallup citizens who need nicer, clean clothes but are shopping on a limited budget.

"You can't go wrong for a dollar," she said laughing, shirts

folded over her forearm.

Jeff Banaszak, director of finance and operations at Rehoboth, said the store sells around 200 items each Saturday. Of the shop's modest profit, about half of the proceeds go to student financial aid and the other half to store expenses.

Banaszak said the shop is not intended as a money-making venture, but a ministry.

"It's a way for the church to help the Gallup area," he said. "We're really proud that everything is \$1. It lets us give out a tremendous amount of clothes."

Despite the turnaround, the shop has amassed a huge overflow of inventory, which they're storing in a giant tower of cardboard boxes in a back room. Banaszak said the store plans to send excess items to Crownpoint, where they will be distributed for free.

The store gets a new shipment every two weeks or so, and constantly accepts donations from locals. Banaszak estimated that around 25 percent of items are local and the remaining 75 percent are from elsewhere around the country. Much of the current stock was shipped in from Iowa and California. Locals can claim the donations on an itemized tax return and receive a receipt when they drop off clothing.

Banaszak said that Rehoboth has long been supported by churches from around the country.

"A lot of churches love the idea of a high-quality Christian school here," he said. "Many churches come out and volunteer with the school and are aware of the hardships in the area."

Some asked if they could send clothing to the area, so Banaszak assembled a group of volunteers who fixed up the Old Rehoboth Church and made the store a reality. Banaszak said the store is hoping to expand its hours and eventually open on Wednesday evenings.