

Vintage Sale 22 October, 2019

A tremendous fundraiser experience

I became a member of the vintage sale preparation team in September. When I arrived, numerous boxes and suitcases had already been emptied and their contents hung on various racks ready for pricing. I noticed that many hands had so far been hard at work and great organisational skills were already very appreciable.

I decided to help regularly with the sale preparations since I had many years of experience in organising flea markets in the past. This vintage sale, however, was unlike anything that I had previously known. It took me on a journey through numerous feel-good moments. This “hands on” fundraiser brought many members close together, working in one space as a team in the spirit of solidarity for the benefit of women and children in need.

The day of the vintage sale

I always use public transport to travel into town. The train ride from St Job to Merode takes approximately 15 minutes. The walk to 13 Ave Gaulois, the venue of the vintage sale, takes 10 minutes. This means I normally have to dress more often than not for possible inclement weather. Wearing the right shoes and all-weather gear are always considerations. On the day of the vintage sale I didn't want to be caught off guard so I decided to wear my lightweight raincoat and high-top MBT shoes. But my MBT shoes didn't look really chic with my dark blue sleeveless dress. What to do? I decided to buy a pair of fashionable shoes from the vintage sale. Which pair? There were so many for sale. Luckily, one member in the shoe section must have read my face and took pity on me. She directed my attention to a stylish pair of black and beige high heels. I tried the pair on. Thank goodness, it was a perfect fit. I was then presentable for the day. Since I was a model in the catwalk starting at 12:30, I was informed shortly after I arrived that a make-up artist and hairdresser were expected to enhance the models' appearance for the fashion show. This was all news to me; a moment of total transformation lay ahead. The make-up artist was a young cheerful FdE member and vintage sale enthusiast. Within fifteen minutes after meeting her, she and I were discussing the merits of high-quality cosmetics and food. The vintage sale team spirit brought us together.

Behind the scenes organisation of the sale was minutely executed over many weeks and it was no different for the logistics of the fashion show. Music selection, dressing room preparations, scheduling, fashion show script etc., needed to be coordinated. The models were asked to select 4-5 stylish outfits several days in advance of the sale. In addition, I was instructed to select a casual and colourful afternoon “ensemble” something I would normally not wear. A flowing skirt with a matching jacket never existed in my wardrobe.

It was definitely an exciting adventure to be restyled for a short time in an unfamiliar way. My dark blue evening dress won the approval of many at the show. One interested shopper stopped me before I returned to the dressing room and complimented me on it in a rather lengthy exchange. It made me feel warm and whole on the inside. I shared a heartfelt moment with a total stranger. When do we have such positive feedback (with a stranger) in today's world?

The fashion show was over but not the tremendous experience. This fundraiser was in full swing when I left the dressing room for the last time. I happily joined the shopping frenzy in the building prepared to interact and connect with more members.

On the first floor trousers, blouses, jackets and dresses could be found, all hung nicely in order according to colour. There were also accessories such as hats, gloves and scarves displayed in large baskets. In the corner was the jewellery shop. Everything was nicely presented in boxes according to style. One member had even brought her special jewellery stands from home for easy browsing.

Many members were present at the sale, ready to assist interested buyers. One shopper had her arms full of lovely garments. She was offered a shopping bag but declined it. She had created her pile on top of the heater behind one of the racks. She was very intent on making numerous purchases. “It's for charity” she said. She left the sale with six or seven full shopping bags. What a happy shopper!

I noticed one member repurchasing her unsold clothes. Another decided to do some shopping for individuals who could not make it to the sale. She wanted to get them especially nice garments since they had little money to spare.

Walking downstairs to the ground floor, I noticed the cashiers busy tallying up the many purchases. We exceeded our goal of raising € 10,000. They were exuberant as the rest of us. The food and beverage buffet at the entrance of the building was practically empty. When I entered in the morning the table was decked out with scrumptious finger food delights.

Once the sale was over, the clothes were carried down to the basement and rehung on racks. As the saying goes “Many hands make light work” and definitely a successful vintage sale. It made me joyful to think that this fundraiser accomplished more than raising money for charity. It brought many of us members together for the first time and created an enthusiastic team of dedicated volunteers committed to making the best vintage sale ever. I am very grateful for this tremendous experience!

(A member of FdE)