



## **Bargain shopping is booming**

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Traffic is up at thrift stores in Hawaii these days as more cash-strapped consumers look to stretch their dollars.

While regular retailers are rolling out sales and ads to bring in customers, more shoppers are heading to secondhand stores to look for bargains on clothes, household goods and furnishings.

"Our business hasn't been hit by the recession at all," said Phil Carey, district manager for Savers in Hawaii. "As a general rule, we've seen increased traffic to our stores, both in customers and transactions. Everyone's looking for value."

Savers, which has been in Hawaii for 19 years, has two stores on Oahu in Waipahu and Kalihi and one in Kahului, Maui.

At Goodwill and Salvation Army stores on Oahu, the story is the same.

"We are seeing more people come to our stores," said Laura Kay Rand, spokeswoman for Goodwill Industries of Hawaii.

Compared with the first quarter of last year, Rand said there has been a 10 percent jump in sales transactions this year. However, people are also spending less, so there has been no significant increase in sales volume.

But more secondhand stores are drawing in new shoppers like Leilani Vasquez.

A friend tipped her about the deals to be found at Goodwill. Since then she's been hooked, and says she is trying to stretch her dollar during these uncertain economic times.

She does early Christmas shopping, finds Quiksilver and Billabong brand clothes for her kids, and other simple household items that will cost just a fraction of what it would be new at a regular retail store.

Despite what some would think, the folks shopping at thrift stores are not on the brink of unemployment or worried about making the rent.

Some, like Maria Santos, just like to hunt for a good bargain. Santos visits the Goodwill on Beretania Street at least once a week with a good friend. She calls it therapy.

"It's just delightful," she said. "What I really enjoy is, they make it so neat."

Her find? A floral I.N.C. blouse that likely came from a department store for just \$6.99. Jeans can be found for \$7.99.

She says it's good to know that what she buys goes back to the nonprofit, which helps people find jobs.