

The Republican.

Thrift outlet moving to West Side

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WEST SPRINGFIELD - Savers, the thrift store chain that teams up with local charities in more than 235 locations internationally, has signed a 10-year lease for 25,000 square feet at the Century Shopping Center.

The store, scheduled to open in June, will join Bob's Discount Furniture as co-tenant of 135 Memorial Ave., according to Andrew M. Cohen, the Century Center owner. The outlet will employ a staff of 50, he said.

Offering both new and used merchandise, Savers sells clothing, shoes, kitchenware, electronics, sporting goods, linens, toys and furniture. Last year, the company achieved gross sales of \$550 million, according to a spokesman.

The Savers workforce totals 10,000.

The West Springfield store will expand the 10-year-old partnership between Big Brothers and Big Sisters of Hampden County and the Savers store on Liberty Street, Springfield.

"This is an incredible win-win situation," said Beth Russell, executive director of big Brothers and Big Sisters. "Donors get a tax write-off and the children supported by our agency are provided with a tremendous amount of services."

She said her agency takes in \$200,000 annually - more than 20 percent of its budget - from its collaboration with Savers.

The Springfield-based Big Brothers and Big Sisters office currently provides one-on-one mentoring to 350 children annually, and Russell anticipates a 15-percent annual growth in services over each of the next three years.

"Projecting such aggressive growth in this economic climate truly is a testimony to the benefits of our partnership with Savers," she said.

Shopping Center owner Cohen concurred. "Consumers today are looking for bargains, in addition to variety and value. There's also a sense of adventure in shopping at Savers, plus doing something good for the community."

Founded in 1954 and headquartered in Bellevue, Wash., Savers purchases and resells items that are collected and delivered by charity partners, which are paid a bulk rate for the items, whether or not they make it to the sales floor. With 120 charity partners in this country, Canada and Australia, the company pays more than \$117 million annually to nonprofit organizations.

Savers was represented by Peter Considine of the Dartmouth Group in Boston in negotiating the lease.

The Century Shopping Center, the area's first strip center, recently completed extensive exterior renovations. Major tenants at the Memorial Avenue retail landmark include TJ Maxx, Big Y, Modells and CVS.

Information about Savers may be found at www.savers.com Information about Century Center is at www.centuryinvestment.com