

The price is right: H-Z's City Wide Garage Sale great time to find bargains, declutter home

By Betty Taylor New Braunfels Herald-Zeitung

Garage sales mark a sure sign of spring as many homeowners use this time of year to declutter and organize. On March 29, the New Braunfels Herald-Zeitung's City Wide Garage Sale takes place, providing more opportunity to free up that space in the garage, perhaps even making room for, gasp, the car.

The event will include a map locator of various garage sales in the Herald-Zeitung.

A group of neighbors and friends recently hosted a multi-family garage sale off Hueco Springs Loop Road in early March while raising funds for Relay for Life, benefiting the American Cancer Society.

By 10 a.m. on the first day of their two-day sale on a Friday and Saturday, they sold nearly one-third of their items. By the end of day one, they raised \$300. The families shared some of their tips for hosting a successful garage sale.

"If you want to get rid of it, do not price it too high. Price it low," said Ann Keeler, who hosted the event and made sure every item had a price tag.

Many of the items in the sale were priced in the \$1 to \$1.50 range. Shoppers, family and friends also appreciated knowing they were contributing to a cause, Keeler said.

"Ask your friends and neighbors if they have treasures. Even if they don't want to host a garage sale, they may have items to donate. It all adds up," said Becky Voges, who also was hosting the event.

Keeler used different-colored labels to mark items belonging to each family hosting the event.

"You can also make a page for each family or person in a notebook. Each time you sell an item, place the corresponding label on that family's page. That way, you know who sold what," Keeler said.

Keeler also advertised the garage sale and placed signs strategically along the route leading from State Highway 46 to her home so shoppers would know where to find the sale.

The other three families who donated items included Donna and Charles "Bud" Mares, Linda Rae and Dottie Robison.

"Children's toys, glassware and antiques are some of the items that go rather quickly," Donna said.

Tools also were another highly sought-after item.

Becky said she brought a collection of purses to the garage sale, and sold several shortly after they opened for business.

There also were some unspoken rules when it came to hosting a garage sale, the families said.

The garage sale hosts warned of selling items that were gifts from other family members or friends, including gifts from spouses. They also warned of the dangers of selling items without consulting other family members.

"What happened to that picture?" Bud inquired about a "missing" item from their house, as Donna looked the other way.

On the other hand, discretionary "regifting," selling an unused item in a garage sale, was OK, Donna said.

"Even Dear Abby said that was OK," she said.

Visitors to the garage sale were able to find everything from unused doorknobs to an alarm clock which played four different patriotic songs, including "Battle Hymn of the Republic."

Saxon Holt and mom, Audrey Zeller, visited and said they were always surprised at what they find at garage sales.

"We found an antique sled, all handmade, that is nearly 10 feet long at a garage sale in San Antonio. We use it for a coffee table," Zeller said.

Shopper Bobbi Jo Gullledge said shoppers should keep an open mind when visiting garage sales.

"If you go looking for something specific, you will never find it," she said.

As the garage sale hosts looked over the items each family had donated, they eyed a few pieces before reminding each other of another unspoken rule: If you are trying to clean out your garage, don't bring home more stuff.

And while hosting a garage sale takes some work and planning, they can actually be fun.

"It is fun visiting with other people," Becky said.

As shopper Mary Land looked over items, she shared with the hosts that she was a five-year breast cancer survivor. Her news was received with cheers of joy and words of support.

A new garage

Professional organizers say a clean, uncluttered garage can breathe new life into a home.

"The key to organizing the garage is to take everything out and sort items into 'like' piles to see what you have," said Melissa Hix-Walley, owner of The Clutter Pixie. "I have found that buying clear storage bins labeled with bright duct tape is the best solution for garage storage solution. A storage shelf for containers also is very helpful. Buying hardware to hang cords, ladders, tools and bikes also is efficient and cost-friendly."

Esmi Gonzalez with Sort it Out San Antonio, shared some of the following tips for organizing the garage:

- Make it family time or get a couple of friends to help out and do the same for them in return
- Mark the day on the calendar like it's an appointment — block out the time
- Collect supplies a few days out — contractor trash bags, scissors, box cutters, large adhesive labels, Sharpies, packing tape, etc.
- Create an area in driveway for donate/garage sale, recycle and trash
- Divide garage into three zones — left, center and right; tackle one zone at a time from front to back
- Use sticky notes to group "like" items
- Before reloading the garage, figure out where items will be placed; often-used items should be placed where they are easy to see and reach
- Try to get as many items off the floor as possible
- Clean and straighten garage once a quarter to keep it organized

