

REWORKING JUNK | Franchise owner donates the best castoffs

Removal business benefits charities



DEBRA SKODACK | THE KANSAS CITY STAR

Edmond Sorrell (left), a resident at Benilde Hall, loaded up microwaves on Friday. Josh Herron (center), a franchise operations manager, and case manager Brian Rupprecht assisted.

Helping veterans' organizations is important to Andrew Wilson, also a veteran.

Brian Rupprecht considers himself lucky for getting junk.

That junk means that Godfrey S. Kobets-Benilde Hall, a Kansas City residential substance-abuse treatment center for veterans and homeless people where Rupprecht is a case manager, has microwaves, beds, recliners and chairs.

All that stuff came through a program offered by 1-800-GOT-JUNK?, a Canadian company in Vancouver, B.C. that provides full-service junk removal. Company franchise owners are encouraged to hit a goal of either recycling or donating 60 percent of the items removed from houses and offices.

For charities, it means nice stuff that's free.

"It's refreshing to have someone offer us something decent that we can use," Rupprecht said. "It's nice to have 20 chairs that all look the same in the group room."

Looking nice is vital to a place like Benilde Hall because it shows respect for its clients, and it can help with their recovery, Rupprecht said.

"It's very important," he said. "You're trying to become the best person you can be, and that can be hard to do in a place that is run down.

DEBRA SKODACK



GOOD CONNECTIONS

"When you walk through, everything is nice."

The 20 matching chairs in the group room came from an Olathe bank that changed furniture during a remodeling.

Helping veterans organizations such as Benilde Hall is important to Andrew Wilson, who owns the franchise that covers Johnson County, part of Kansas City, Kan., and downtown Kansas City.

Wilson was serving as an infantry officer with the 82nd Airborne Division in Afghanistan when he read a *Fortune* magazine article about 1-800-GOT-JUNK? Thinking that it would be a good business to pursue after the military, Wilson opened his franchise in May 2002.

Early on, he met the company's donation goal in a traditional manner.

"I would pull up to the Salvation Army and unload the stuff, like everyone else," Wilson said.

But as his business grew, he was able to add warehouse space to store the good items. He began inviting churches

THE DETAILS

Kansas City area charities interested in seeing what 1-800-GOT-JUNK? has to offer should call 913-663-2100.

and nonprofits to come and look over what he had.

"They can choose what they want," Wilson said. "If we have it and someone wants it, great. Our goal is not to resell the stuff."

In fact, reselling would be too costly in time and effort, Wilson said.

"Some people say, 'You're crazy, you are giving hundreds of thousands of dollars of stuff over the lifetime of the business.'"

Wilson estimates that about 30 percent of the junk his franchise removes goes to charities.

"But we are able to get rid of it without paying for it," he said.

And for Wilson, doing that often includes helping veterans.

"To help those guys is really meaningful to me," he said.

Good Connections tells stories of people who are giving — and getting — help. If you have a story idea, call Debra Skodack at 816-234-4738 or send e-mail to dskodack@kcstar.com.