



Lana Peacock, East Texas Crisis Center's executive director, left, and Debbie Goodson, Flamingos store manager, show off some of the stylish and high-quality items that are being processed for the sale floor at Flamingos.

Flamboyant Ways

WHEN PREPARING FOR FLIGHT, showy-plumaged flamingos must run many steps before they achieve a gawky liftoff. These bright pink birds quick-step and madly flap their wings to acquire enough lift to soar. But once in the air, flamingos can attain great heights and fly at remarkable speeds. To increase survivability and protect against predators, flamingos are social. They roost and fly together by the thousands and often synchronize movements—marching, head bobbing or wing saluting simultaneously. With a vibrant color and quirky ways, it's apropos that a flock of flamingos is called a “flamboyance.”

In Tyler, there's a shop named Flamingos. Like the species, this shop is remarkable. Flamingos is a resale store, with revenue helping to fund the East Texas Crisis Center. Headquartered in Tyler, the ETCC serves five East Texas counties, offering shelter and other assistance to women and children who are victims of family violence.

ETCC is a nonprofit organization and is funded by grants (33 percent), the United Way (5 percent), and community support (62 percent). The community support comes in the form of direct donations from citizens, religious and civic groups, fundraising events and client fees—and from Flamingos. This story is about the store but also about the important reason it

exists—and the reasons for the community to support Flamingos through donations and by shopping there.

Debbie Goodson, the store manager, explains that ETCC was founded in 1978 as an all-volunteer organization to aid rape victims in Smith County. Now the agency operates a safe haven and advocacy center for victims of family violence, violent crime and sexual assault.

ETCC's services begin at the instant of need with a toll-free hotline, and the umbrella of care expands to encompass shelter for women and children, emergency transportation to a shelter, and medical services accompaniment. ETCC provides legal and criminal justice advocacy and court accompaniment, crisis intervention, support groups, some financial assistance and job readiness training. The center also has a robust intervention program to help women break the cycle of violence, and offers counseling and anger management for the perpetrators of these types of crimes. There are also amenities for children, including after-school programs and support groups. And there is even positive parenting instruction to help families develop positively.

The shelter can house up to 60 women and children, not including babies. It's dormitory-style, with individual rooms or

rooms with bunk beds and cribs where mothers and children can cohabitate. There's a commercial kitchen that serves lunch and dinner, and the residents prepare breakfast on their own from food provided. The shelter has a laundry area and a playground for the children.

One goal of the ETCC is to provide immediate safe harbor to victims, but the work goes beyond emergency response. Typically, victims of violence have diminished confidence and drive. ETCC strives to restore dignity and purpose to these women. One reason women return to an abusive situation is because they have low self-esteem and might not have the job skills to earn enough income to support themselves and their children. ETCC boosts them over this hurdle with life-skills training, including preparing for job interviews.

To support the overall mission, Flamingos was started not only to generate revenue for ETCC but also to provide essentials for the women it serves. "Many times, victims of domestic violence leave with only the shirts on their backs," Debbie says. The store is used as a resource to help them get back on their feet with basics, and then as a continued support source as these victims take the steps to gain self-sufficiency.

Through the ETCC, a client will receive a voucher to shop at Flamingos in an amount based on their need. Some victims may have been able to escape their abusive situations with minimal clothes but might not have anything suitable for a job interview, work or church. Beyond clothing, once a client is ready to set up a new household, the store is used to help supply them with free household items and furniture.

But everything in the store is also available to the public. As much as she encourages donations to the shop, Debbie urges shoppers to patronize the store. Besides feeling good about



Flamingos offers all types of ladies clothing, including luxurious evening gowns and high-fashion cocktail dresses.

Flamingos Retail Store

2108 S. Broadway Ave., Tyler 75701
(903) 593-2553

Store Hours

Monday: Closed

Tuesday–Friday: 10 a.m.–5 p.m.

Saturday: 11 a.m.–4 p.m.

East Texas Crisis Center

Learn more about the mission and ways to help at etcc.org.

ETCC Outreach Offices

Hotline for all counties: (903) 595-5591 or 1-800-333-0358

Henderson County: (903) 675-2137

Rains County: (903) 567-0959

Van Zandt: (903) 567-0959

Wood: (903) 342-6111

supporting the ETCC with purchases, shoppers can find some exceptional deals. Many shops have been billed as "upscale resale," but few can boast the finds at Flamingos.

The shop handles "anything a woman can use." There are small household items, small appliances, home décor items and furniture. Then there more personal items such as clothing, shoes, accessories, costume jewelry and scarves. But here's where Flamingos flies high above the rest: Some of the high-toned brands that have lined the shelves include Lafayette 148 New York, Escada, Dolce & Gabbana, Tory Burch, Doncaster, Dooney & Bourke, Coach, Versace, Old Gringo and Lucchese boots, and St. John. There's also plenty from Chico's, Nordstrom and others. Most are gently used, and there are even some new with tags. "You can never predict what will come in," Debbie says. "Hardly a day goes by that we don't get in some nice donations."

As for the furniture, there are trendy and useful items, interesting décor and some lovely antiques. There are brand-new lamp shades donated by House of Lamps, regular antique donations from Royal Passage Antiques and Gifts, and items by Rega of Paris. As validation of the quality, Flamingos is one of the best-kept secrets of local interior

designers, with many finding items for staging.

The shop has three employees, two part time and one full time, but volunteers are welcome—at the store and the crisis center. Volunteers at the store help research, process and tag items; help with general cleaning such as dusting and vacuuming; and also assist shoppers.

Help from civic organizations is always welcome. One group that is particularly helpful is the Daughters of Isis. Occasionally, the store will have events such as fashion shows, and Debbie said this group is always on hand to work.

As much as she loves to see the glee from shoppers when they score a truly fabulous find, the main source of Debbie's joy comes from the shoppers the store was designed to help. "I see a lot of these ladies as they come in with an advocate," she says. "A few months later, they are back shopping again. They are now out on their own and come back to shop because they know they can get very nice things at a good price. They also come back to support the store because they know it supports the shelter that helped them and will help others."

The store accepts donations. "If the items are big, we can make arrangements to come and get them," Debbie says. Furniture in good shape is always welcome, but large appliances such as refrigerators, washer and dryers can't be accepted.

Laid out like a nice boutique, the store is well organized and clutter-free.



Debbie asks that clothes be clean and on hangers. Flamingos can't take bagged clothes because they do not have laundry facilities at the store, so the clothes need to arrive presentable. Also, it's important to note that the store only accepts and sells women's clothing.



The store is a decorator's delight, with a good mix of antiques, trendy décor items and everyday serviceable housewares.

"I'd say the one thing that makes Flamingos different than other resale shops is the quality of our merchandise," says Lana Peacock, the executive director of ETCC. "Regardless of how wonderful the store is, we need people to come in and shop. Every dollar that comes in does double duty. It really truly does!"

Debbie adds: "You can get something really very nice for the price, and it all goes to benefit the women and children of the shelter."

Want to get the best deals? On a surprise day each week, the shop has a 25 percent off sale. Facebook followers are the first to learn about this, and also they get news of events and "super special" items that are for sale.

A flamboyance of flamingos works together and flies together. But to land, a single bird must put both feet on the ground. Similarly, the clients of Flamingos retail store are encouraged to new heights with the help of others. And pink feather in hat, they are empowered and emboldened to land on both feet.

Stay Safe and Warm During a Winter Storm

LAST YEAR SHOWED US HOW THE POLAR VORTEX can bring high winds, subzero temperatures and ice to many parts of the country, even those that aren't accustomed to winter weather. This dangerous winter weather can cause hazardous road conditions, downed power lines and extended power outages. Be sure to stay safe before, during and after a winter storm hits.

If power lines go down because of a winter storm, you may be in for a prolonged power outage as utility crews work to get the lights back on.

The National Weather Service tells us that winter storms are deceptive killers because most deaths are indirectly related to storms. Many hazards can remain after a winter storm is gone.

Following are some more tips on how to stay safe and warm during a winter power outage:

Stay inside and dress warmly. Close off unneeded rooms and place draft blocks at the bottom of doors to minimize cold air entering the house. Cover windows at night.

Be aware of the temperature in your home. Infants and elderly people are more susceptible to the cold. You may want to stay with friends or relatives or go to a shelter if you cannot keep your home warm enough.

When the power is restored, there will be a power surge. To protect your circuits and appliances, switch off lights and unplug appliances. Leave one light switched on as a signal that the power is restored.

Apart from the cold, there are other dangers winter storms can bring. Downed power lines could be submerged in snow and ice, making them difficult to see. Therefore, you and your family should stay indoors if possible.

If you must go outside, use caution and treat all downed and hanging lines as if they are energized. Stay away, warn others to stay away, and immediately contact your utility company if you see downed lines.

Be sure to have a storm preparedness kit ready before a storm strikes to help get you and your family through a power outage. This kit includes: bottled water, non-perishable food, blankets, warm clothing, a first aid kit/medicine, a flashlight, a radio, extra batteries and toiletries.

If you are using an alternative heating source during a power outage, be sure that you know how to use it safely and that you have already gathered all the supplies for it. You should have enough supplies in your preparedness kit to last everyone in your household three to seven days.



Dangerous winter weather can cause hazardous road conditions, downed power lines and extended power outages.

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Debbie Robinson

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- Friday**, Economy Drug, *Grand Saline*



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Adding weatherstripping to windows will keep winter chill out and pay dividends in the summer by keeping cool air inside.

Fight the Winter Chill

ANOTHER COLDER-THAN-NORMAL WINTER is predicted for much of the country this year, including Texas. Frigid temperatures can cause heating systems to work overtime. Because heating and cooling can make up nearly half of your electric bill, you may experience sticker shock when you open that bill. Instead of waiting until after a potentially high bill arrives in your mailbox, be proactive. There are things you can do now to help ensure that you are managing your energy use and spending less:

- ▶ Wrap exposed pipes and water heaters located in unheated spaces.
- ▶ Make sure to change your air filter once a month.
- ▶ Keep drapes closed at night, and keep those that don't get direct sunlight closed during the day, too.
- ▶ Keep the fireplace damper closed when it is not in use. Leaving it open can bring cold air into the room.

▶ Caulk around the fireplace hearth, and caulk or weather-strip around doors and windows.

▶ Log on to your Wood County Electric Cooperative account to keep up with your usage. If we've had a few days of frigid temperatures, see how you can try to save on days that are milder.

▶ Dress for the weather, even if you are inside. Wearing proper clothing like long sleeves and pants, or wrapping up in a cozy blanket can help combat the temptation to bump up the thermostat.

Obstacles to Saving

Using these tips can certainly help you manage your energy use, but your bill may still be higher than normal in winter months. Why? The weather makes a big impact on electric bills, accounting for nearly half of your bill. Even those with the most efficient HVAC systems will see more usage in extreme weather.

When extreme cold temperatures hit, heaters work overtime. For example, even if you set your thermostat to the recommended 68 degrees in the winter, when it is 19 degrees outside, your system has to work hard to make up that 49-degree difference. Your heater works harder and cycles on

and off more often in colder weather, making your use much higher. That means your bill will be much higher.

But remember, there is value in comfort. For us to be comfortable in our homes, our heaters are going to work harder—but it may be worth the additional cost to you.

Additional Tips To Enhance Efficiency and Comfort

Take a look at Wood County Electric Cooperative's Great Rebates, where you can earn rebates for 18 qualified energy-saving actions for residential and small business consumers. There's also a lighting rebate available for our commercial and industrial members. Details and rebate forms are at wcec.org under the Member Services tab.

Operating Your Generator Safely

SNOWSTORMS, ICE AND FALLEN TREE BRANCHES can all cause blackouts. When the electricity goes out, generators can help you get through and stay warm until power is restored. However, before ever starting a generator, it is vital that you have educated yourself on how to use one safely.

There are two types of generators for homeowners to choose from: standby and portable. Standby generators are connected directly to the house and typically are powered by natural gas or propane. These generators start automatically when the power goes out.

A portable generator is usually gasoline-powered and is movable. You can power appliances by plugging them into it. Your generator should have a greater output than the wattage of the electronics you plan to plug into it. This way, the generator will be able to create the extra electricity it takes for the initial power surge. Make sure there is nothing plugged into the generator when you first turn it on.

When you refuel a generator, make sure the engine is cool to prevent a fire should the tank overflow. Be sure to keep children and pets away from the generator, which could burn them.

Generators pose electrical risks, especially when operated in wet conditions. Use a generator only when necessary during moist conditions. Protect the generator by operating it under an open, canopy-like structure and on a dry surface where water cannot form puddles or drain under it.

Carbon monoxide fumes emitted by the gasoline engine on a generator can be deadly. Always operate your portable generator outdoors, at least 10 feet from your home.

If you are not careful with the installation of a portable or standby generator, you can put the lives of others in danger because of backfeed—a situation where a generator is feeding electricity back through your electrical system into the power lines. To prevent backfeed, standby generators should

have a transfer safety switch installed by a professional.

Portable generators should never be plugged directly into a home outlet or electrical system; use an extension cord to plug appliances into an outlet on the generator.

It is recommended that a generator be operated once a month for 10 minutes to ensure that it will run properly when needed.

Store a standby generator in an easily accessible, weather-proof area. Have enough fuel for at least 24 hours in case of a power outage.

When the electricity goes out, a generator can help you get through and stay warm until power is restored. However, it is vital that you know how to use it safely.



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Power Tip

They're out of sight, but don't forget about your air ducts. Taking care of them can save money and energy.

Check ducts for air leaks. Take care of minor sealing jobs with heat-approved tape, especially in attics and in vented crawl spaces. Call the pros for major ductwork repairs.



HAPPY NEW YEAR!

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We wish you and yours a healthy, prosperous and happy new year!

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