

Corona del Mar Residents Association

A voice for everyone who calls 92625 their home!



COLUMN: GETTING TO KNOW CORONA DEL MAR BUSINESSES

By Bruce Carlin, CdMRA Member

RECYCLED RAGS



Thrift store? Nope. Used clothing store? Not really. Recycled Rags is a high-end and mid-range designer consignment store that carries only the best, from handbags to women's clothing to men's clothing.

Vera Kennedy, Recycled Rags' owner, has been with the store for 35 of the 51 years the store has existed on Coast Highway in Corona del Mar. She came into the store 35 years ago to "help out" her sister Audrey Patterson, the founder, and has worked there ever since. When Audrey died six years ago, Vera took over and helped run the business along with Audrey's son Gary. When talking with Vera, you can feel the family atmosphere with her staff, people like Herminia Lopez who's been there 30 years handling quality control and keeping the store looking beautiful. People like Kathy VanKat, a former model who originally worked fashion shows for Recycled Rags as well as doing sales in the store. And associate Julie Bockman, who sells and also manages their very successful Instagram presence.

Vera says the things that make the business thrive are taking a personal interest in her customers and her consigners, and the amazing people on her team. The staff gets to know their customers and shows them the best that they have to offer. When I entered the store to talk with Vera on a Tuesday (historically the worst day for retail), the store was buzzing with customers and sales associates helping them. Even though it was busy, I was immediately greeted with a warm smile.

They carry high-end clothing that must have been originally purchased no more than three years ago, is in excellent shape, and select designers that are of high quality. Chanel is a name that sells well, along with Yves St. Laurent and Louis Vuitton. Unlike department stores that must bring seasonal merchandise in way before the actual season, Vera brings in seasonal merchandise *in the season*, when people want it. While the consigned merchandise is not new, from the presentation on the floor, you would never know it. All is pressed, presented well, and categorized logically. Their best-selling categories are handbags and high-end jewelry.



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On the last Sunday of the month, Recycled Rags has its famous “Parking Lot Party”, where select merchandise is 40% off. It’s been a well-attended tradition for years, for those “in the know.”

The store had to close down at the beginning of the pandemic but re-opened in June, and people have been coming back. Vera says that many people still aren't aware that they're open, but based on how busy it was when I walked in, it seems that word is spreading.

In her not-so-much spare time, Vera sings in the choir and tends to her two kitties at home. Probably not known to many, she was in a band with a piano and bass drums for 20 years, where she was the singer, all while still working at Recycled Rags!

Recycled Rags
2731 East Coast Highway
Corona del Mar