

Community Forklift plans to recruit volunteers

■ Hopes efforts would help spearhead better business organization

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The staff of the Community Forklift in Edmonston has come up with a unique way to help organize its business — hosting volunteer singles activities.

This move comes as a result of the difficulty the business has in securing volunteers through traditional methods.

The Forklift, which opened November, provides affordable building materials and keeps reusable items out of the waste stream, such as county landfills.

Low income homeowners and people in search of inexpensive items to repair their homes can find help at this facility.

"We tried to have a regular volunteer effort because we're severely understaffed," said Outreach Coordinator Ruthie Mundell.

"We're operating out of a 40,000 square foot building so it's definitely a big task."

She said she thinks the volunteer singles would be a great idea. "When people do something for you, you want to give something back to them and this was something nice and social we could do for them."

The forklift hosted its second singles mixer Sunday and attracted about 15 singles. A large majority of the materials available at the forklift comes from deconstruction (a

process in which homes slated to be torn down are taken apart in the reverse order.)

One of the bigger issues the forklift staff faces is in organizing and categorizing these materials, which get jumbled in the process of transportation — hence the need for volunteer assistance. Volunteers open paint cans and put a thumbprint so customers know what color paint they're purchasing, sort cabinet pieces, and measure and labeled door sizes, among other things.

"We're going to have a workshop for kids called 'Dollhouses for Little Tree Huggers,' where we'll teach them how to build out of scrap materials," Mundell said.

"To get them talking, I put them into pairs, a guy and a girl, and had them look for items the kids could use for their doll houses."

Mundell works in conjunction with The Single Volunteers of D.C., an organization that help community projects find volunteers.

"They have so many groups that they can only do it with us once every two months, although I'd like to do it more often," Mundell said.

Forklift President Jim Schulman said being intimately involved with the community is not just an aspect of the store, but part of the forklift's mission.

"It's not just where people can buy affordable products but it's also a place for the community to gather and dream," he said.

"It's something we're going to grow into as the staff grows. It's tough doing all we want to do with our skeleton staff of four."

"But," he added, "we're confident we'll be able to hire more staff and



BARBARA L. SALISBURY/THE GAZETTE

While Kevin Stringham (left) of Gaithersburg shakes a can of paint, Tracey Chambers (center) of Silver Spring and Kristine Barbiera of Columbia, share a laugh as they mix paint. All three came out Sunday to the singles event at the Community Forklift in Hyattsville.

maybe even [establish] a coffee shop or at least a coffee kiosk."

In addition to the singles activities, the forklift recently held an auction of Pentagon items (including some hardwood doors that are still available) to benefit the Pentagon 9-11 Memorial Victims, sponsored by New Covenant

Church in Colmar Manor.

From April 27 through April 29, the business will host its grand opening featuring music, food, lectures and a blessing of the green builders by a Jewish rabbi and Baptist minister and possibly another performance by the surf band Reverb Galaxy.

"They have dancers in beehive hairdos and guitars that light up in the dark," Schulman said.

In May, the forklift will host a gospel fundraiser.

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