



## Paws Down, this Thrift Shop is Pretty Close to Purrfect

Written by: **Paula Yudelevit**  
Photography by: **Lance C. Bell**

*Pick of the Litter* thrift shop, located at McHenry Plaza in McHenry, MD, sells gently-used items for a great cause. All the proceeds from the shop support HART for Animals in its mission of saving the lives of adoptable animals in Western Maryland. The shop carries gifts, housewares, fashion and home accessories, pet items, furniture, children's clothing and toys, and seasonal items.

“The money we raise at *Pick of the Litter* is helping us purchase much-needed equipment and supplies for the new adoption wing at the HART Animal Center,” says Michael Pellet, President of HART. “We don’t pay rent for the space, thanks to the generosity of building owner, Hugh Umbel. This is a significant contribution to our cause.”

The thrift shop is run by two part-time staffers, Manager Michelle Umlauf and Emilie Bowman, and maintained by volunteers who do everything from accepting donations and stocking shelves, to creating seasonal visual displays and merchandising. “We have such an amazing group of volunteers,” says Michelle, “They really have fun helping our customers, but I

think they love getting first pick of the merchandise that comes in!”

Volunteer Meg Collins, the visual merchandiser for the shop, agrees. “It’s so much fun to see what comes into the store each week. I love seeing the merchandise sell as quickly as I create the displays, knowing it all benefits HART!”





The shop is merchandised much like a retail boutique. Vignettes showcase seasonal or specialty products, while other items are grouped by category, such as the fashion accessories department, the pet room and the book nook. A favorite among customers is the kitchen and housewares room. “We get many rental property homeowners, first-time homeowners, and college students in need of dishes, glasses and cooking accessories,” says volunteer Kathi Dalton. “We recently received beautiful never-used heavy white porcelain pizza plates and over-sized salad bowls from a local restaurant that was changing out their dishes!”

**Top photo: Overview of *Pick of the Litter Thrift Shop*, McHenry Plaza, McHenry, MD.**

**Inset photo: Emilie Bowman (left) and Michelle Umlauf are ready to help with your purchases.**

**Facing page photo: Volunteer Meg Collins is the visual merchandiser for *Pick of the Litter Thrift Shop*.**



Many first-time customers who are vacationing in the Deep Creek Lake area often comment that the shop and its merchandise look too good to be a thrift shop. The *Pick of the Litter* reflects the same high standard and quality that have become the HART trademark. HART Executive Director Paula Yudelevit, explains. “Every item we put on a shelf is inspected for nicks, tears, cracks or any other damage. Our customers expect good quality, gently-used merchandise – that’s why they continue to shop our store.”

Many of the thrift shop’s customers are also donors. “I’ve been known to bring in some housewares and giftware as donations, and leave with ‘must-haves’ that I hadn’t seen before,” says Diane Kusner.

*Pick of the Litter* accepts gently-used household items, knick-knacks, home accessories, small appliances, fashion accessories, jewelry, garden items, Christmas ornaments, baby items, pet toys and accessories, and other items other than clothing. “We are always in need of volunteers,” says Michelle.

The *Pick of the Litter* thrift shop is open on Fridays, Noon to 6 pm, Saturdays, 10 am to 5 pm, and Sundays, Noon to 5 pm. For more information, please visit [www.hartforanimals.org](http://www.hartforanimals.org) or call the shop at 240.442.5370.

HART for Animals, Inc. is a charitable animal welfare organization founded in 2003 to improve the condition of homeless animals in the Western Maryland region. HART is a 501 (c) (3) corporation and all donations are tax-deductible. For additional information on HART, the HART Animal Center or any of its programs, or to donate, visit the HART web site at [www.hartforanimals.org](http://www.hartforanimals.org).



**Top photo:** Matthew and Megan Gajweski, and Mia Crystaloski entertain Golden Retrievers, Morganne and Brandie while their parents shop.

**Bottom photo:** Fashion Accessory Department at the Thrift Shop. Inventory changes quickly, so stop by often to get first pick.