# Sorting

## General Introduction

Volunteers working in the sorting area at Fresh Start are a vital part of the behind-the-scenes work. All of the home goods donations received by our donations staff are brought to the sorting area. The soft items, such as bedroom, bathroom, and kitchen linens are deposited into the large bins in the sorting area. Hard items, such as small kitchen appliances, pots and pans, and dish sets are put on the donation shelves in the back of the sorting area. Volunteers working in the sorting area draw from the bins and/or the shelves and, in an organized fashion, process what they find. If you have any questions, always feel free to ask any of your fellow volunteers for help!

Safety is always our primary concern. Please keep the emergency exit doors clear, walkways clear of donations, and do not attempt to lift any item beyond your weight capability. There are always other volunteers in the store that can move that small appliance for you!

Keep in mind that a donor might have given us multiple bags and/or boxes. If you find what seems to be an incomplete set of dishes, sheets, etc., alert the sorting team, and put it aside while the volunteers work through the rest of that donor’s donation.

## General Acceptance Guidelines

Fresh Start accepts donations of practical items for our clients which have been gently-used and are in good working condition. We do not accept items which are broken, torn, stained, foul smelling, covered with pet hair, show any evidence of insects or rodents, or are missing parts. We do not have the ability to pre-screen all donations and therefore the donations brought to the sorting area can fall into a wide range of conditions. Disposable gloves are provided for volunteers who wish to wear them.

We only accept seasonal items during the appropriate season due to space limitations. We do not accept items that have religious or political undertones.

Almost all of the donations are given to families in need. However, if a donated item looks like it might be of value, it is set aside with a note on it for our volunteer who researches these items. Value might stem from it being an antique, a desirable item on eBay, or a donation of substantial value (e.g. a brand new KitchenAid Mixer). We do consign or sell some items in order to help pay for some of our operating expenses.

# Disposal Guidelines

Important: If a donated item smells poorly or exhibits any signs of insects, etc. it is important to put the item directly in the dumpster. Any of the other disposal options discussed below are not necessarily removed from the store on a daily basis and therefore are not appropriate for a foul item!

That being said, it is our goal both to keep items out of our landfills whenever possible and reduce our garbage disposal costs. For these reasons, we provide a wide variety of recycling or donation alternatives:

- For textiles:
  - Savers receives any items which are in a good condition but are on our do not accept list. The Savers boxes are on the rolling cart in the sorting area. These are brought to Savers at the end of every shift. Please do not give anything to Savers that they would not be able to proudly sell.
  - The Wrapping Bins, found under the counter in the sorting area, are where you can deposit unacceptable linens in decent condition that might find another life with the client. These linens should be a handy size for wrapping artwork and/or covering furniture surfaces in moving.
  - The Textile Recycling Bin, under the counter, holds textiles not appropriate for the above two bins. We are paid on a $/pound basis for these items which we take to the Hudson Transfer Station. Place these items directly into 13-gallon trash bags within the bin.
  - Often times a volunteer will offer to take a few bags to Buddy Dog. These linens, primarily towels, should not contain wires (e.g. electric blankets), stuffing, or be of a nature that an animal could catch their paws on the fabric. These donated linens will be used in the dogs' cages.
- For items other than textiles:
  - The bin labeled Items for Free Shelf, under the sorting counter, is for small decorative items of good quality. For example, a nice picture frame, a pretty vase, a good-sized single coffee mug with words of encouragement on it, a crystal candy dish, a nice figurine, etc. Our clients are here for practical items to help them get back up on their feet but, at the same time, it is nice for the personal shopper to choose something unique and attractive for the client to display in their house. These items are moved onto the Free Shelf in the showroom when space permits.
  - The bin labeled Kitchen Items for Bins Outside, also under the sorting counter, holds everyday items (primarily kitchen but there is leeway) that are best chosen by the client based on their needs and interests rather than by our team of volunteers. Examples of these items are Bundt pans, drawer organizers, novelty mugs, unique kitchen tools, etc. These items are moved into the outside bins when space permits.
  - Savers receives any items which are in a good condition but do not meet any of our clients' needs, as discussed above for textiles.
  - Hudson Swap Shack items can be left in the designated bin found in the loading dock area. Typical Swap Shack items are usable items that could not be sold by Savers,

like dishes with minor chips.
    - Recycling bins are available in the loading dock area for your typical residential recycling items such as tin, aluminum, plastic (with a stamped recycling logo) and all kinds of paper, including newspapers, cardboard and broken down boxes. Bins are also available for glass and metal.

Looking to volunteer a bit more? We are always looking for volunteers to drop off the Buddy Dog, Textile Recycling, and Savers donations to their respective locations!

# Presentation Guidelines

We want the home goods area of our showroom to be attractive and, in large part, how the items are cleaned and packaged in the sorting area contributes to achieving our desired look. It is always vital for linens and housewares to be clean before being placed in their bins in the sorting area. Clean linens are generally tied in ribbons before being put in their respective bins or shelves in the sorting area and eventually placed out on the showroom floor. It is desirable for like items to be packaged in similar size bundles so they stack neatly on the showroom shelves. Items should be tied snuggly so that the bundle does not fall apart when handled.
Restocking Guidelines

It is our goal to have a well-stocked showroom. Replenishing items on the floor should be done before our opening hours or after the clients are completed for the day. Whenever possible during our shifts, donated items which have been processed should be placed into that item’s applicable bin or shelf space in the sorting area. There will be times, due to low inventory as a result of a hectic day, when items will be needed on the shelves in the showroom during the middle of a shift. This restocking should be done without interfering with the work being done for the clients.
Care of the Sorting Area

We do our best to keep an organized sorting area with bins and shelves to store the majority of items that will be processed on any given day. It is important to understand that the inventory can fluctuate greatly from week to week, so we need to be flexible and creative with our storage solutions.

At the end of each shift, the volunteers should take some time to ensure that the sorting area looks neat and organized for those who will be working the next shift. At shift’s ends, please do the following:

- Clear off all counter tops and tables. Any item left on the counter will only cause confusion for the next shift. If you are in the middle of a big project, like testing and cleaning an appliance, you may leave the appliance on the counter with a note as to its status. If you were about to start a small project, like measuring a set of sheets, just put the sheets back in the donations bin for the next shift.
- Vacuum the floor in the sorting area.
- Start the dishwasher, if necessary. Note on the dishwasher the status of the contents for the next shift (dirty/clean).

- Restock the showroom floor, as necessary.
- Note any categories of items that are in low supply and give this list to the front desk.
- Note any categories of items in unusually high supply. Tell the front desk and they might consider increasing the client limit for that item.
- Notify the front desk of any cleaning supplies or stationary items that are in low supply.

Let’s learn about the specific items we will be sorting; linens, tableware, and housewares, and decorative items.

LINENS

We accept:

- Bedding: sheets, bed blankets, comforters & bedspreads, duvet inserts and duvet covers, new bed pillows, new or like new mattress pads
- Bathroom: towels, beach towels, shower curtains and curtain rings, bath mats, bath rugs, bathroom accessories, new shower liners
- Kitchen: placemats and napkins, dishcloths, dish towels, tablecloths, table runners, potholders
- Miscellaneous: rugs (large and small), curtains (at your discretion), baby linens, decorative pillows, throw blankets, and new stuffed animals

We DO NOT accept:

- Items that do not meet our General Acceptance Guidelines (refer p. 1)
- Dust ruffles (unless with a matched comforter)
- Used bed pillows, mattress pads, or shower liners
- Fitted sheets that don’t have good elastic and a minimum of 9” corner depth
- Older electric blankets
- Curtains (at your discretion)

Bedding

- Sheets
  - All sheets should be matched and put into sets: flat sheet, fitted sheet and pillowcase(s). There should be one standard pillowcase for a twin set, two standard pillowcases for full and queen sets, and two king pillowcases for a king set.

- Measure (see reference chart displayed on wall in sorting area), fold into a small neat package, and wrap the sheet sets tightly using ribbon. Tie the set as you would a present (both length and width-wise).
- Make sure the folded smooth edges of the sheets and pillowcases are all going the same way so that they look neat.
- Use the white labels found in the folders on the sorting counter (twin, full, queen, king) to label the sheet sets.
- Put in appropriate sorting room bin.
- If you cannot make a matching sheet set:
  - If you only have a flat sheet, fold and tie the flat sheet, label it with the white labels found in the folders on the sorting counter (twin, full, queen, king), write ‘flat only’ on the label, and put it in the proper bin in the sorting area.
  - If you only have a fitted sheet, locate a complimentary colored flat sheet in the appropriate size flat sheet bin, locate the correct number and size of pillowcases, and process as in steps 1-5 above.If you have only miscellaneous pillowcase(s), roll, tie, label as ‘1 std.’, ‘2 std.’, ‘1 king’, or ‘2 king’ (using a blank white label), and put in the proper containers found on the shelves in the showroom. There are three containers: one for a single pillowcase (found in the Twin section), one for a pair of standard pillowcases (found in the Full section), and one for king pillowcases-singles and pairs (found in the King section).

## Bed Blankets

- Measure (see reference chart), fold, and wrap blankets tightly using ribbon. Tie the set as you would a present (both length and width-wise).
- Use the white labels found in the folders (twin, full, queen, king) to label the blanket.
- Put on a shelf in the sorting room or on the appropriate shelf in the showroom.

## Comforters & Bedspreads

- Measure (see reference chart), fold, and wrap comforter using ribbon or, if available, place in a comforter storage bag.
- Use the larger colored labels found in the basket on the shelf in the sorting area (twin, full, queen, king) to label the comforter.
- Put on appropriate sorting room shelf or showroom shelf.

## Duvet Inserts and Covers

- If you have a duvet insert within a duvet cover, process like a comforter (see above).
- If you have a duvet insert without a cover, locate a cover in the appropriate bin in the sorting area, insert the duvet inside the cover, and process like a comforter.
- If just a duvet cover has been donated, measure, fold, and tie and label as a (insert size) duvet cover, and store in the applicable bin.
- Note that duvet covers can often be used to cover a comforter in marginal condition and give the comforter new life.

- Bed Pillows
  - Bed pillows are only accepted in new condition and are put out on the showroom floor or, if a large quantity, in the storage area. Do not add any donated pillows to our stock without adding the number of new pillows to our inventory (item #724 in the web-based shopping system - ask a fellow volunteer if you do not know how to do this).

Bathroom

- Towels
  - Towel sets are made up of a bath towel, hand towel and face cloth. A guest-sized hand towel (smaller than a normal hand towel) can be placed in addition to, but not in replacement of, a regular hand towel in a set.
  - If you don’t have a perfectly matched set, put together a set that goes well together.
  - After inspecting, fold each towel and facecloth in threes and stack with folded edges all going the same way. Wrap tightly, like a present, using ribbon.
  - Put in appropriate sorting room bin.
  - If individual towels are donated and there are not a sufficient selection to make a set, place the neatly folded towels into their respective bins in the sorting area.
- Beach Towels
  - Roll and tie. No label is necessary.
  - Put in appropriate sorting room bin, if one exists, or on the appropriate shelf in the showroom.
- Shower Curtains
  - Fold and tie with ribbon like a present. No label is needed.
  - Liners donated in original wrapping should be left as is.
  - Loose shower curtain hooks, in sets of 12, are to be placed in a small Ziploc bag.
  - Put in appropriate sorting room bin, if one exists, or on the appropriate shelf in the showroom.
- Bath mats and Bath Rugs
  - Fold, tie, and put on the appropriate shelf in the showroom. No label is needed.

- Bathroom Accessories
  - Bathroom accessories, such as small wastebaskets, soap dishes, toothbrush holders, Kleenex box covers, etc. should be clean and displayed near the bathroom shower curtains and rugs.

# Kitchen

- Placemats and Napkins
  - Count, roll, and tie placemats and/or napkins. Keep matching sets together.
  - There is no need to put placemats and napkins, which are donated separately, together as sets.
  - Using a blank label, write the number in each group (ex. 8 placemats, 4 napkins).
  - Put in the appropriate sorting room bin, if one exists, or on the appropriate shelf in the showroom.
- Dish Towels and Dishcloths
  - Fold and put in the appropriate sorting room bin, if one exists, or on the appropriate shelf in the showroom.
- Tablecloths
  - Measure length and width and determine the shape (oval, round, rectangle, square).
  - Using a tablecloth form found in the tablecloth folder on the sorting counter, fill in the information including length, width, # of people at table, and date received.
  - Hang tablecloth on a hanger.
  - Use a safety pin to attach the form to the tablecloth. Tablecloths are hung by color and size (round and square on top, oval, rectangle on bottom) in the showroom.
- Table Runners
  - Measure length and width.
  - Write measurements on a blank label and stick on runner.
  - Place on a hanger. Table runners hang on the end of the top rack in the showroom.

# Miscellaneous

- ## Rugs
    - Large rugs are handled by the volunteers who are cleaning furniture in the storage area.
    - For smaller rugs (door mat size), vacuum, stain treat if necessary, measure and roll with the rug pattern showing.
    - Write the size on a piece of masking tape and put the small rug in the showroom in the linen section.
- ## Baby Linens
    - Roll and label baby linens. Be specific about what the item is: crib sheet, receiving blanket, etc.
    - Put in appropriate showroom bin.
- ## Decorative Pillows
    - Place on a couch as a nice accessory or in a cardboard bin in the showroom.
- ## Throw Blankets
    - Couch and smaller sized throw blankets are rolled and tied.
    - Use the white couch throw label found in a folder on the sorting table for the larger throws.
    - Put on the appropriate showroom shelf.

# TABLEWARE

We accept:

- Dish sets
- Glasses and Mugs
- Silverware

We DO NOT accept:

- Items that do not meet our General Acceptance Guidelines (refer p. 1)
- Alcoholic beverage glasses (wine glasses, beer mugs, etc.)
- Items with logos
- Chipped or cracked dishes (minor chipped items can be deposited in Swap Shack bin)
- Dishes, Glasses, or Mugs if there are less than 2 matching items
- Jelly jars or mason jars to be used for drinking glasses
- Coffee cups/mugs that are not big enough to hold a decent sized cup of coffee or tea
- China and non-dishwasher-safe dishes

# Dish Sets

Complete Dish Sets

- A complete dish set (“Dish Place Setting” in the web-based shopping system) is made up of a minimum service of 4 dinner plates and at least two different matching components (i.e. 4 dinner plates plus 4 bowls and 4 mugs, or 4 dinner plates plus 4 luncheon plates, and 4 bowls, etc.).
- There does not need to be the same number of each dish item as long as the minimum service is satisfied. The number of dinner plates will dictate what the serving size of the dish set is.
- We do not break up large sets that are donated to us but we should ensure that they are given to a large family.
- All serving pieces (bowls, platters, butter dishes, and so on) are kept with the dish set.
- Any set which does not have at least 4 dinner plates but still provides a nice assortment of dishes can be bundled together as extra dishes (“Dish Place Setting – Extra” in the web-based shopping system). Clients can pick these sets in addition to their primary dish set.
- To package up a dinner set (primary or extra),
  - Locate the small blue dish set forms.
  - Count the number of each dish item (e.g. 6 dinner plates, 6 bowls, 8 saucers, etc.).
  - Enter these numbers on the blue dish set form.
  - If this is an extra set, write “Extra dishes” on the blue dish set form.
  - Holding a sample of the dish pieces aside, package up the dish items and place in a sturdy copier paper box (with a lid). The sample will be placed inside of the box on top of the wrapped contents.
  - The total number of boxes (generally 1 or 2) is noted on the dish set form.
  - The dish set form is inserted in the box with the sample.
  - The number of boxes is written on the side of the box (e.g. Box 1 of 1, or Box 1 of 2 and Box 2 of 2).
  - If this is an extra set, write “Extra dishes” on the side of the box.
  - The boxes are given to the volunteer who is photographing inventory items and assigning inventory numbers and QR codes.

## Incomplete Dish Sets

- We retain items that are not a set but for which there are at least 2 matching items.
- These items can be placed on the dish shelves in the sorting area. They will eventually be found to be good matches for existing sets or be placed out in the showroom as extra bowls or serving dishes to supplement the clients’ dish sets.

## China

- As a rule, we do not accept china but sometimes a china set will come in with a donation. China would not be given to a client as their primary dish set because it is often not dishwasher safe and/or microwave safe.
- China that seems fragile or is rimmed with silver or gold should be given to Savers. We do not want to risk our families putting the china in the microwave.
- China that seems suitable for everyday use should be packaged up as extra dish set (see above).

Glasses and Mugs

## Glasses

- Any loose glasses are stored in the bins which says “glasses to be made into sets” in the sorting area. Periodically, glass sets are made from these unmatched glasses.
- A glass set, if possible, should contain an assortment of at least 2 different sizes of glasses (e.g. 4 small and 4 large or 6 large and 4 medium).
- There should be a minimum of 2 of each size of glass in a set. A set should be a minimum of 6 total glasses.
- Glass sets are safely wrapped and boxed.
- A piece of paper should be taped to the outside of the box to detail the appropriate family size (Family of 1-3, Family of 4-6, Family of 7+), and what # and size of glasses are contained in the box.
- All the glasses in the set do not need to match but a good effort should be made for the glasses to look like they belong together.
- We do not break up large sets of glasses that are donated to us but we should ensure that they are given to a large family.
- Boxed glass sets are stored on a shelf in the showroom with overflow on the shelves in the sorting area.

## Mugs

- Sets of 4 or more mugs should be placed in bins in the sorting area until they are needed in the showroom.
- Attractive sets of 2 or 3 mugs can be placed in the Kitchen Items for Bins Outside bin.

# Silverware

- If a silverware set is received, it should be packaged as such.
- If stray silverware is donated, it should be sorted by type of utensil and put in the bins on the sorting shelves (or sometimes kept in the storage area).
- Any rusty utensils should be put in the metal recycling bin.

- A silverware set is service for a minimum of 4. A set contains dinner forks, knives, and teaspoons (at a minimum) but often also desert forks, and tablespoons.
- When silverware sets are packaged from unmatching items, we generally make bundles to serve 4, 6, or 8.
- If a large matching silverware set is donated, we do not separate the donation. It is packaged up and we try to ensure that it goes to a large family.
- When making silverware sets, an effort is made to combine items with similar handles. Depending on supply and need, these efforts need to be relaxed at times.
- Silverware sets are placed in gallon plastic bags, masking tape is used to secure the items, and the service (4, 6, 8, etc.) is written on the masking tape.
- Finished sets are kept in bins in the showroom and overflow is kept in bins in the storage area.

# HOUSEWARES

We accept:

- Prepware: mixing bowls, measuring cups, measuring spoons, cutting boards, colanders, knives, etc.
- Cookware: sauce pans, frying pans or skillets, casserole dishes, etc.
- Bakeware: cookie sheets, baking pans, cake pans, pie plates, muffin tins, etc.
- Kitchen Utensils: Spoons, spatulas, whisks, can openers, tongs, soup ladles, rubber spatulas, etc.
- Small appliances: coffee makers, blenders and/or food processors, hand or stand mixers, microwaves, toasters, etc.
- Lamps and shades
- Plastic storage containers and plastic tableware items

We DO NOT accept:

- Items that do not meet our General Acceptance Guidelines (refer p. 1)
- Wooden utensils, bowls, and cutting boards (unless new)
- Teflon pots and pans that are highly scratched and/or in poor condition
- Large or built-in appliances
- BBQ or camping tools or dishesSingle-use plastic storage containers
- Specialty items that would be used infrequently by our clients

## Prepware

- Mixing bowl can be stacked and put on their place on the shelves in the sorting area.
- Measuring cups, both solid and liquid, and measuring spoons are placed in their bin on the shelves in the sorting area.
- Cutting boards should be gently used or new and should be stacked on the shelves in the sorting area.
- For knives,

- The sharp ends of knives should be wrapped in plastic wrap. Sets of knives (e.g. paring, bread, cleaver, utility, etc.) are grouped together and taped with masking tape.
- Sets of 4 or more steak knives are labeled as such and masking taped together.
- All knives can be stored in their bins on the shelves in the sorting area.

## Cookware

- The lids to pots and pans should be taped, using masking tape, onto the pot.
- Any extra lids are placed in the bin of extra pan lids on the shelves in the sorting area. Likewise, if a pan does not have a lid, try to match it with a lid.
- A small set of matching pans can be stacked as a set. Clients generally can only choose 3 saucepans and 2 skillet so large sets are not kept together to go to one client.
- Pot and pans are stored in the bins (small pans, large pans, skillets) in the sorting area and on the showroom floor.
- Lids to casserole dishes should be taped on, using masking tape.
- Casserole dishes are stored on the shelves in the sorting area.

## Bakeware

- Glass and metal baking items are stored in their respective bins in the sorting area.

## Kitchen Utensils

- Kitchen utensils are sorted to their respective bins in the sorting area. There are individual bins for the common utensils. Unique items, for which you cannot find a bin, are put in the Kitchen Items for Outside Bins bin so that the client can choose that item.

## Small Appliances

- Appliances need all their parts. Instruction manuals, if donated, need to stay with the item.
- We cannot test an appliance fully but we can do a cursory check to make sure it, at a minimum, seems to turn on and operate. Appliances can be tested in various ways:
  - Heat a glass of water in a microwave to ensure it works.
  - Plug in and see if unit (crockpot, waffle maker, coffee pot burner, iron, etc.) gets warm. Be Careful!!
  - Plug in and see if unit functions (blender, toaster, mixer, etc.).
  - Most appliances that do not work can be left in metal recycle.
  - Once tested, wrap the cord with a twist tie or tape.
  - Cleaned and tested appliances are given to the volunteer who is photographing inventory items and assigning inventory numbers and QR codes.

Lamps

- All lamps need to be tested. If the lamp needs a lightbulb, one can often be found on the shelf above the sorting counter.
- If the lamp does not work and it is of decent quality (e.g. not a cheap desk lamp), give to the men in the repair area of the backroom. They can either fix it or, at a minimum, use it for parts. Broken inexpensive lamps should be put into the trash.
- If the lamp does not have a shade, attempt to find a matching shade. Extra shades are kept on the top shelf in the sorting area. Lamps for which we cannot find an adequate shade are put aside to see if a shade comes in. After a reasonable period, if no shade is found, we give the lamp to Savers.
- If needed, a supply of harps and finials can be found at the repair bench in the sorting area.
- Once tested, wrap the cord with a twist tie or tape.
- All lamps are given to the volunteer who is photographing inventory items and assigning inventory numbers and QR codes.

## Plastic storage containers and plastic tableware items

- We receive many plastic storage containers in poor condition and therefore, we need to be selective. New single use containers can be handed out to clients. For used items, we tend to save items of a Tupperware quality or above. The items we do not keep can be put in the recycling bin if they have a recycling code on the bottom or given to Savers if they are of adequate quality.
- Plastic storage containers are often bundled.
- Nice plastic dishes and cups should be bundled. They are a favorite of families with children.
- Items are kept in various bins (plastic dishes bin, storage containers bin) in the sorting area.

DECORATIVE ITEMS

## Artwork

- Accepted artwork is often handled by the volunteers who are cleaning furniture in the storage area. All pieces of cleaned artwork are given to the volunteer who is photographing inventory items and assigning inventory numbers and QR codes.

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