

By: Sheryl Erenberg

don't discard it – donate it!

As the years pass, our lives all become a little cluttered. We acquire and we accumulate and eventually those closets and storage rooms just won't hold anything more.

It's then that you should look to shed a few "excess pounds" and clear out the old furniture, unused clothing, and idle sports equipment that you no longer need.

There are times when doing so is absolutely necessary, as when you're downsizing – say, moving from a large house to an apartment. Even if you're moving to a similar-sized space, it's a good opportunity to dispense with some of the "junk" that you've collected along the way.

But don't just heave it all into a dumpster because one person's trash is another's treasure. And remember, the three R's always apply – so look to reduce, reuse and recycle wherever you can. Don't consign that unused item to a landfill when someone else – someone in real need – can use it and would be grateful for it.

The Canadian Diabetes Association offers a pick-up service for clothing, small appliances, household goods, furniture and – depending on the condition – major appliances excluding refrigerators.

The charity then sells what it collects to Value Village, putting all proceeds towards its diverse programs assisting

those living with diabetes. Local CDA collection centres are listed in the phone book or call 1-800-BANTING (226-8464).

Goodwill Industries operates 35 stores which accept clothing and small household items like toasters, lamps and VCRs. Their larger stores will also accept furniture and they also have numerous tractor trailer donation centres where staff can give you a hand unloading. Check the agency's website at www.goodwill.on.ca for the store or donation centre nearest you.

Skates and hockey pads that you haven't worn since high school? Cross-country skies that you haven't used since you made the leap to downhill? The old 10-speed that's been gathering dust since you bought that new European racing bike? You can sell them to a store that buys and sells used sports equipment. Or give a kid a sporting chance by donating it all to a non-profit group such as the St. Alban's Boys and Girls Club (416-534-8461).

How about books? If you're like many

people, you've got boxes of them that you will never read...or, having read them, have no desire to keep in your personal collection.

You can always pass them on to a friend or neighbour. Donate them to a local church bazaar or hospital. Magazines can also be passed along or perhaps your doctor would appreciate a few new additions for his or her waiting room!

There are many charitable organizations that could benefit from your generosity. In fact, Community Information Toronto has a special help line (the first in Canada) that supplies information on all the agencies in the city. Simply dial "211" and you'll be automatically connected to the call centre. Or learn more by visiting the CIT website at www.communityinfotoronto.org.

So open that closet and take a long hard look at what you've got. Is it worth hanging on to for another decade or two? Is it worth paying to store it somewhere? If not, get rid of the clutter and get on with your life!

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someone else can use it.**