

Organizations forced to foot the bill to dispose items left outside donation bins [Lancaster Watchdog]

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Have you noticed clothing, furniture, electronics and other miscellaneous items collecting next to over-stuff donation bins? Your loyal Watchdog has and finds it especially disconcerting to see those donated items ruined when it rains or snows.

One reader wrote to ask about who's responsible for the damaged items and trash that can pile up outside the donation bins.

To start, the Watchdog wanted to find out what the organizations that sponsor the bins hope they will be used for. Three organizations that maintain bins in Lancaster County – the Salvation Army, Goodwill and Community Aid – publish lists on their websites listing what can be donated via a bin. That's the best place to look for information or answers to questions.

Community Aid's website says only clothing and shoes should be placed in its bins. Household and other items should be dropped off at a donation center located at one of its thrift stores. The organization also warns people to never leave items outside of the bin because they are often damaged or ruined by the elements. And more importantly, it's Community Aid that has to pay to dispose of that trash.

The Salvation Army has five bins in Lancaster County, according to Major David Wilson, who works out of the organization's offices in Harrisburg. Like Community Aid, the Salvation Army prefers only clothing and shoes be placed in its donation bins.

Non-breakables are OK, but Wilson said the preference is that anything breakable or fragile be dropped off at the Lancaster Thrift Store at 1244 Manheim Pike. Larger items, like furniture, should never be left at the bins.

Wilson said the organization has been asked to remove donation bins in the past because of the mess created when items are left outside. He also said donated items should not be left outside the thrift store when it's closed.

"There are people who regularly show up when we are closed, open the bags, steal donations and leave whatever they do not want on the ground," he said.

Wilson said the Salvation Army is left to cover disposal costs in these situations, which diverts money away from delivering help to those in need

Goodwill, which has donation bins at four locations around Lancaster County, asks people to only place in bins what will fit, said Mark McGaffin, spokesman for Goodwill Keystone Area. The fate of items left outside depends on weather conditions, he said.

Larger items can be dropped at one of Goodwill's many store locations in the county. Addresses for three stores near Lancaster city are 2353 Lincoln Highway East in East Lampeter, 2600 N. Willow Street Pike in West Lampeter, and 121 Rohrerstown Rd. in East Hempfield.

Community Aid accepts larger items at its East Hempfield store at 31 Rohrerstown Rd.

How to dispose of the other items

In talking with these charities, the Watchdog learned that there are some items that are just not accepted. That goes especially for tube style TVs or monitors – you know, those relics from the pre-flat-screen era. Damaged clothing and shoes shouldn't be left in donation bins. As for heavy duty items like window air

conditioners, the Salvation Army will accept them at its thrift store, but Community Aid says it can't accept them.

For those items that can't be accepted, the organizations say the best option may be the Lancaster County Solid Waste Management Authority.

Residents can dispose of hazardous waste – computers, TVs, laptops, cameras, or cell phones – at no cost at LCWMA's drive-thru facility at 1299 Harrisburg Pike in Manheim Township. Residents can drop off 10 electronics per day for free.

For anyone looking to dump a large amount of material, open loads must be covered with a tarp or a \$20 penalty is assessed, said Karen Gross, a spokeswoman for the waste authority. The tarp requirement is to avoid litter, she said, as poorly secured items are known to fall off of uncovered truck beds.

Fees apply for all loads. For more information on where loads can be dumped and the 2024 fee schedule, go to lanc.news/2024/LCSMArate.

Donation Bin Locations

Goodwill

Clipper Magazine Stadium st 650 N. Prince St.

Root's Country Market at 705 Graystone Road, East Hempfield Township.

Weiser's Market at 680 Furnace Hills Pike, Warwick Township.

Amos Herr Park at 1700 Nissley Road, East Hempfield Township.

Goodwill Donation Center at Lancaster Shopping Center, 1625 Lititz Pike, Manheim Township.

Salvation Army

Trinity Lutheran Church at 47 W. Main St., Mount Joy.

Landis Market at 1982 State Road, East Hempfield Township.

Ace Hardware at 14 Herrville Road, Pequea Township.

Millersville University at 101 Shenks Lane, Millersville.

John Herr Market at 25 Manor Ave., Millersville.

Community Aid

The organization lists over 350 locations across central Pa on its website. Lancaster County locations include:

Annunciation Greek Orthodox Church at 64 Hershey Ave.

First National Bank at 1416 Lititz Pike, Manheim Township.

Conestoga Valley Christian Community Services at 2420 Gehman Lane, East Lampeter Township.

AAA Central Penn at 804 Estelle Drive, East Lampeter Township.

Trinity Reformed UCC at 450 W. Main St., West Hempfield Township.

Targets of Theft?

A reader recently wrote to the Watchdog to report the Goodwill donation bins located in a parking lot at 1668 Oregon Pike in Manheim Township are being plundered by people after the Goodwill worker often stationed there to sort items leaves for the day. The reader said the people often ask that after-hours drop offs be given directly to them instead of placed in one of the bins.

Goodwill Keystone Area's Mark McGaffin said the organization has been notified of possible activity and is working with Manheim Township Police on the issue.

Barry Waltz, public information officer with the department, confirmed that reports of the activity have been received, but when officers went to the location they didn't see anyone. Anyone who sees suspicious activity at the bins can call the Manheim Township Police at 717-664-1180 to report it.