



Fundraiser: Retail manager Sally Hammond adjusts a display in the City Mission's Great Opportunity Shop.

Photo: STACY SQUIRES

# Good hearts prove to be plentiful in charity shop

You can always trust a cat to find the warmest place.

Christchurch City Mission cats Mish and Mash are no exception.

Mash has found a perfect spot nestled into a sheepskin rug on a couch in the middle of the Great Opportunity Shop.

The high-backed couches provide a perfect refuge for the sleepy cat among the secondhand goods that cram the shop.

An excited six-year-old boy has spotted Mash from across the shop and is hurtling across to greet her.

"Hello, cat. Hello, cat. Hello, cat," says the boy as he cranes over the back of the couch to look down on the unamused Mash.

The two cats have become mission mascots. They were adopted as strays and with typical feline opportunism quickly made themselves at home.

As the Christchurch City Mission raises money for a new \$10.5 million building, CHARLIE GATES spends a week discovering how the mission helps some of the city's most disadvantaged people.



Retail manager Sally Hammond says the mission's night-shelter residents "love the cats to bits".

The shop is a place to rummage for a bargain, but also a place that provides secondhand bedding and

clothing to those in need.

All items are donated by companies and individuals.

The shop is full of strange and wondrous things.

There is a vodka party game, a crystal-growing set and Des O'Connor cheekily looking up from a pile of vinyl records on the floor.

A Phar Lap-tribute tea towel, mattresses, cutlery, saucepans, golf clubs, suitcases with exotic travel labels, couches and a box of Happy Meal toys are all on display.

## FACTS

### THE GREAT OPPORTUNITY SHOP

- There are nine mission opportunity shops in Christchurch, Kaiapoi and Rangiora.

- All stock is donated by companies and individuals.
- The shops are run by 18 paid staff and volunteers.
- All shop income goes back to mission services.

Hammond says occasionally a genuine treasure is donated to the shop.

A pair of Michael Smither art prints were donated last year and sold at auction for \$1100.

That kind of windfall comes about once a year, she says.

In the shop, a man is testing every golf club with a single swing, while another man is clutching a pair of computer speakers and casting a critical eye over an old scanner.

The child who disturbed Mash's

sleep has been rewarded with a \$2 toy truck.

The radio provides calming background music to the busy shoppers.

Feargal Sharkey starts singing "a good heart these days is hard to find".

My week at the mission has taught me they are more common than you might think.

■ To donate, call 0900 MISSION or visit [www.citymission.org.nz](http://www.citymission.org.nz)