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Partying With Re-Purpose: Thrift stores provide just the ticket to a popular party trend

“One thing that keeps people from throwing a big party is coming up with ideas to make theirs unique,” says Jo Greenawalt, Director Business Development for Impact Thrift Stores, Inc. “But they don’t need to worry about that anymore.”

She points to a series of in-store posters featuring “TableScapes,” a popular concept in event presentation. It revolves around collecting items representing the theme of your party and arranging them on tables, chairs, trunks, chests—anything that evokes your event’s central concept—providing unique decorations while setting an appropriate mood.

Greenawalt encourages those struggling to come up with something unique to stop by one of our three stores. “You can get all kinds of ideas just by walking through our aisles,” she continues. “It’s so much fun, and if you get stuck for an idea, just speak with one of our Bric-a-Brac staffers for help. They’re familiar with the stock, and will know what they can bring out of the back room for your consideration.”

She urges shoppers not to limit themselves to one theme concept. “Sometimes you’ll see an item that will trigger another idea. I was looking for graduation-themed items and ran across three coconut heads. That made me think, ‘Wow, let’s turn this party into a luau!’”

Use your imagination: Many decorative items can also serve some other function. For instance, a graduation party rarely goes without beer. You might choose a child’s wading pool, put the keg inside and fill it with ice. Surround it with a few pool toys and stick some college-style pennants into the ice and you have a beautiful themed display that will keep your suds cool.

For a more sophisticated presentation, affix faux college emblems and pennants on the outside of a large old suitcase or steamer trunk. Line it with a large, heavy-duty trash bag, fill with ice and bottles or cans of your favorite beverage.

- Trunks and suitcases can function as tables when stacked atop each other—great display foundations for going-away parties before a trip abroad or a cruise vacation.
- Don’t have enough tableware but still want to make a better impression (and be more environmentally friendly) than simply using disposable paper and plastic items? Thrift stores offer loads of these items, and mix-and-match is trendy now.
- Throw a garden party without a finished garden: Pick up some lawn furniture and several multi-colored umbrellas to provide shade. Fill some big planters with smaller potted plants and larger, long-leaf plants to provide “instant garden” ambience.
- If you don’t want to store what you picked up for the party, be even more environmentally correct: Re-donate it to a specific organization or—better yet—back to the thrift store for someone else to enjoy.

Don't overlook the potential of thrift store finds as perfectly acceptable party gifts as well as decorations. Frugal is in, and encourages thrift in the recipient. Particularly well-suited for graduation and housewarmings, themed baskets containing linens, picture frames, hangers and other staples make thoughtful gifts for those just starting out on their own. Post-party, consider giving the furniture, tablescapes and other decorative items to the graduate or new nesters to give them a great start on their new lives!

It's Greenawalt's job to ensure the quality of donated items coming into the stores remains high enough to use as party props and gifts. Proceeds from the non-profit's three Bucks-Mont area stores financially support 17 local charities. This is possible through the generosity of individuals donating gently-used clothing, furniture and household items. Learn more and download a copy of Impact Thrift's "Re-Purposed Party Guide" from their website at <http://www.impactthrift.org>.

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DOWNLOAD HIGH RESOLUTION PHOTOS OF TABLESCAPES FROM THE IMPACT THRIFT WEBSITE AT <http://www.impactthrift.org>.