

There are more than 2.5 million reasons to like this North Idaho store

By Chuck Malloy

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As any store manager can attest, retail is a tough business, and good help is hard to find.

Not so much with Bizarre Bazaar, Sandpoint's "upscale resale store," which is celebrating 20 years of operation. [Bizarre Bazaar](#), the flagship fund-raiser for the [Community Assistance League \(CAL\)](#), is staffed by volunteers and the store items are donated goods. Unused items are offered to other thrift stores.

"The store is like walking into a boutique," says Sherry Fulton, who has been involved with the store since it opened. "We sell gently-used linens, household items, men's and women's clothing. We also have crafts ... there are no other craft stores, and extensive used books. There are some incredible donated items."

"And a pair of jeans costs \$5," she says.

Money from the sales go back into the community in the form of educational scholarships and grants to local nonprofit organizations. CAL has been around for 46 years, according to Joyce Price, the board president, and the list of beneficiaries is long.

"This year, CAL expects to distribute more than \$225,000 to local students and community programs," Price said. "Over the past 20 years, Bizarre Bazaar has helped generate more than \$2.5 million in funding for the community. Bizarre Bazaar plans to continue serving the community for many years to come. Ten years ago, CAL established an endowment fund through the [Idaho Community Foundation](#), ensuring that its support for students and nonprofits will continue for generations."

The kind of generosity and spirit I see from those associated with CAL is part of what makes North Idaho such a special place.

Lindsey Hughes, board president for [Sandpoint Area Seniors, Inc. \(SASi\)](#), says that CAL has given her nonprofit organization more than \$60,000 over five years.

"CAL supports not only our nutrition program through grants for fresh food and produce, but it has been instrumental allowing SASi to provide an inviting center where seniors gather (including installation of a cooling and heating system). At Christmas-time, CAL brings generous gift bags for seniors who are home-bound. The community impact is immeasurable."

Tone Stolz, executive director of [Pend Oreille Arts Council](#), says her nonprofit has been a partner with CAL since 1992, and CAL has been instrumental in the success of the Kaleidoscope Visual Arts Program.

“Without this program, there would be no art classes in any of the elementary schools in Bonner County. Their support means the world to us,” she says.

Debbie Love, executive director of the [Bonner Community Food Bank](#), expresses similar sentiments. Support from CAL helped with the purchase of a walk-in cooler and a scale for weighing donated items.

“They’ve truly strengthened our ability to serve our neighbors with dignity and care,” Love says. “They are the kind of organization you can call upon in times of need and trust that they will be there. I’ve experienced that firsthand.”

Mariah Decker, head coach and executive director of [Unique Center for Athletes of Needs \(UCAN\)](#), says CAL over the years has provided “thousands of dollars in funding that directly impacts our daily operations. Their support allows us to invest in essential equipment and compensate instructors who create meaningful, consistent programming to our athletes.”

As Decker well points out, CAL’s impact goes well beyond her nonprofit organization.

“I’m reminded of a quote that reflects who they are,” Decker says. “Never doubt that a small group of committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it’s the only thing that we ever had (Margaret Mead). That is exactly what CAL represents, a group of dedicated, caring individuals working to make Sandpoint and the surrounding communities stronger.”

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