

BY DIANNA STAMPFLER

've been hitting antique fairs and flea markets since I was in college—intrigued by the reuse of quaint pieces of furniture that told a story, as well as served a purpose. Today, I've added the online market of eBay to my shopping repertoire, taking my treasure hunting to the virtual realm. I dare say, I'm bordering on addiction—but I see it as my responsibility to help "recycle" these items.

My house is a mishmash of items that "spoke" to me, so I just had to buy them! My red and black dining table once served diners at the Cherry Hut in Beulah— it was a birthday gift to myself in 2010. Last summer, I scored a 6-foot-long red bench from the Allegan Antique Market that is now used as a coffee table (and sometimes foot stool). My growing collection of prints by artist Fletcher Ransom—who once lived down the road in my hometown—adorn various walls in my living room. Trinkets on bookshelves show my love of Michigan!

Everywhere you turn in my house, there are testaments on the floors and walls to my love of bargain shopping for shabby chic items that create a charming story about where it was found and how much it cost. You don't get that memory when you purchase something from a big box store, right?

My fascination with home (and garden) design is fueled by a handful of cable television shows – including HGTV's "Cash & Cari" – which features Michigan's own Cari Cucksey.

Scoring a TV show on HGTV wasn't something Cari thought of when she launched RePurpose Estate Services – one of the most prominent businesses of its kind in Michigan – and RePurpose – a 1700-square-foot retail shop featuring a treasure trove of antiques, consignment items and the fabulous finds that she picks up through her estate jobs.

There's no question that since she's made her mark on cable TV, it's definitely generating more attention in the world of thrifty repurposing and her businesses specifically. "It's been a non-stop whirlwind," Cari says.

In 2010, TV producers were scouting for a female "liquidator" to build a series around estate sales. After checking out her website and meeting with the charismatic Cari, they knew they had found their girl.

A film crew was sent to follow her on the job and on January 3, 2011, "Cash & Cari" debuted. Currently, production is underway for season 3 which was filmed between October, 2011 and March 2012, and will be beginning in May. Check hgtv.com (search Cash & Cari) for broadcast times. Full episodes can also be viewed online.

RePurpose business is moving forward at an intense pace, and since the "Cash & Cari" hit the airwaves, she's increased her work load and her staff, helping in many ways to boost Michigan's economy.

In addition to her show on HGTV, Cari has appeared on "The Nate Berkus Show" and Fox-Detroit, as well as being featured in USA Today, Family Circle, Country Living and HGTV magazines.

"It's all a blessing – putting Michigan in a good, positive light, especially Detroit," she says.

Cari's also now offering franchise opportunities, starting at \$20,000 for a five-year commitment. RePurpose Estate Services out of Grand Rapids (616-329-8499 | affiliates.repurposeestate.com/grandrapids/) is currently the only other affiliate location in Michigan, and is owned and operated by Kyle and Beth Hansen.

"Every house is filled with memories," the Hansen's wrote on their Face-book page. "Regardless of the size or style of the house, it is filled with stories. It is our passion to listen to and preserve these memories with care and respect, and also have the privilege of passing along these stories to those who come and bring these treasures to their own house of memories."

To learn more about RePurpose, including shopping hours, estate services

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and franchise opportunities, visit repurposeshop.com. Keep up with Cari on Twitter, @ CariCucksey.

Another notable shop in the southeast region is Consign and Design Decorating Solutions in Canton, which showcases upscale furniture and home décor, timeless treasures, lamps and lighting, rugs and so much more. Decorating classes and special events mean you can get hands on when it comes to trendy decorating tips. (734-254-0705 | consignanddesigncanton.com)

Plan a visit to Bungalow 47 – a boutique in historic Williamston, owned by Jill Rinner and Chantelle Diemling. Here, shoppers can find vintage furniture, home accessories and even fashion items and jewelry. Throughout the year, classes are offered on a variety of topics, where the expert team shares tricks of the trade to turn trash into treasure.

(517-614-1455 | bungalow47.com)

Traverse City has three notable resale shops worth a visit, if you find yourself in that northwest Michigan neighborhood.

Top Drawer Consignment and Furniture is a great place to pick up upscale household finds – like furniture, rugs, lamps and classy décor and artwork. (231-922-9762 | topdrawerresale.com)

Reclectica offers great eclectic furniture consignments – including classic, cottage and designer styles. (231-929-0022 | reclectia.net)

Chairitable Resale Furniture delivers an array of colorfully painted refurbished furniture to fit any design styles. A portion of proceeds from sales in this store go to local VSA Arts programs – which offers those with disabilities the opportunity to participate in, learn through, excel in and enjoy the arts.

(231-313-7777 | chairitableresale.com)