

Turning trash into treasure

MC student encourages others to be less wasteful

The chairs in Amelia Schroeder's living room, the shelves that hold her books, her rugs, her trash cans, even the futon she converts into a bed—all were found during Schroeder's adventures in Dumpster diving.

“When people think of Dumpster diving they think ‘Ew,’” said the 22-year-old Marietta College senior. “But there's actually less trash than you would think and a lot of useful things.”

Though it's helped furnish her Putnam Street apartment, as her parting gift to the college Schroeder is hoping to eliminate the waste she's seen in two years of sifting through MC trash containers.

Schroeder is encouraging her fellow students as they move out of their residence halls to stop the habit of just tossing out what they no longer need and instead to donate it to local organizations.

Marietta College is putting a special storage unit in front of McCoy Hall for donations, with the furniture collected to go to EVE Inc. and the office supplies to St. John Central Grade School.

“We want to be as supportive of Amelia's efforts as possible,” said Fred Smith, director of the college's physical plant. “The success of this event will have a positive impact on the environment, as we will reduce the quantity of refuse placed in the landfills, and it will affect the lives of people living in this community who are in need of these items.”

Schroeder said she was shocked when she started attending the college and saw what was being thrown away.

“It was such a waste,” she said. “It makes me sad for people in general, and I think it's a social thing in a way. It feels good to throw it away. It's a social power.”

A self-described “scavenger” since childhood Schroeder, from Sarahsville, said she learned from her parents' example.



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Marietta College senior Amelia Schroeder furnished the majority of her Putnam Street apartment with discarded furniture from chairs to trunks to bookshelves and plant stands. Now that she's graduating, Schroeder is encouraging fellow students to be less wasteful by donating things they don't need as they move out.

“Our family was in the lower socio-economic status, but we never went without anything because my parents were very resourceful,” she said. “My mom always recycled, and it kind of snowballed for me. I thought that if I’m going to recycle I can do so much more than that.”

In the college Dumpsters, Schroeder has found not only furniture but still-packaged dish towels and sheet sets, full boxes of laundry detergent, whole reams of office paper unopened, new notebooks and all kinds of school supplies.

One of her favorite finds, she said, was a vacuum cleaner.

“I thought there was no way it worked, but I plugged it in and it did,” she said. “It’s also really nice to never have to buy things like laundry detergent. We find so many things brand new or in really good condition.”

Schroeder said she and her friends will deliver all the items left behind as students move out to EVE and St. John’s school.

“Aside from landfill avoidance, I really wanted to do this to help the not-for-profits,” she said. “The women working with EVE a lot of times have nothing when they start out. And there’s so much out there they could have.”