



*"Let it be known that furniture builds not just homes but **families.**"*

– Furniture Sharehouse Client

Furniture Sharehouse

Furniture Sharehouse provides furniture for FREE to people in need in Westchester

Furniture Sharehouse collects gently used furniture from the public, and redistributes these pieces free of charge to people who are struggling. Clients select 10-15 pieces of basic furniture – beds, dressers, table & chairs, a sofa – so people can rebuild their lives with dignity and hope.

Our Vision

Every child should have a bed to sleep in.

Every family should have a table and chairs to gather around at mealtime.

Impact

We furnish 460 families a year. Since opening in April 2007, we have furnished the homes of over **12,500 people** including **6,200 children**. More than half our clients are female heads of households. **We have distributed more than 68,000 pieces of furniture worth over \$4 million.** The thrift-shop value of what we give each family is about \$1,500; money our clients simply do not have. And the number of clients we furnish increases every week.

Why Do We Exist?

- Every day in Westchester, people sleep on the floor, eat on the floor, and store their clothes in garbage bags. And that's just sad.
- People who cannot afford furniture do not get a good night's sleep, making them less productive at work and less likely to retain a job.
- Children who do not have beds arrive at school tired and unable to focus.
- Families who do not have a table and chairs miss out on important ways to strengthen family bonds and share each day's experiences.

Who are Our Clients?

- Domestic violence survivors
- People moving out of homeless shelters
- People with intellectual or physical disabilities
- Victims of fires or floods or personal trauma
- Senior citizens whose savings have been depleted by illness, job loss or just poverty

All clients are at or below the poverty line. And all deeply appreciate the furniture they receive.

Where do we get the furniture we give away? From people like you!

- Our truck picks up from people moving, downsizing, redecorating, or cleaning out attics.
- We are a volunteer-run organization, founded in 2007 by Larchmont resident Kate Bialo.
- Furniture Sharehouse is the *only* furniture bank in Westchester and the tri-state area.
- Furniture Sharehouse recycles *thousands* of tons of materials every year. We good for the environment, reducing incineration and helping municipalities reduce carting costs.
- It costs us \$350 to furnish each family. Every dollar helps us furnish more families.



DONATION GUIDELINES

DONATE YOUR GENTLY-USED FURNITURE DIRECTLY TO WESTCHESTER FAMILIES IN NEED!

Furniture must be in **GOOD CONDITION** – tax receipt available

ITEMS WE DO ACCEPT:

Kitchen/Dining Room Tables & Chairs
Dressers
Night Stands
Coffee and Lamp tables
Desks (no over-sized or office desks)
Bookshelves
Lamps
Small electric appliances (in working order)
Mirrors
Clean, vacuumed area rugs (no larger than 8' x 10')
Artwork
TVs (in working order, not older than 10 years, no larger than 27")
TV Stands
Metal bed frames (no king-sized)

NOTE: VERY GOOD CONDITION used Mattresses, Box Springs (NOT King-sized) and Upholstered Goods may be accepted at our warehouse location – see website for details.

ITEMS WE DO NOT ACCEPT:

Cribs, car seats, strollers
Baby equipment
Dishes, linens, pots & pans, bric-a-brac
Sleeper sofas
King-sized bedding
Platform or Captain's beds
Waterbeds
Hospital or electric beds
Armoires/Entertainment Units over 5' tall
Glass-topped dining room tables
Oversized or very heavy items
Large appliances
Office furniture
Outdoor or wicker furniture
Pianos
Computers or other electronic equipment
Exercise equipment
Air conditioners
Light fixtures that require installation

For complete Donation Guidelines and more information

www.furnituresharehouse.org



PROPOSAL FOR FURNITURE COLLECTION BIN IN MUNICIPAL YARD

What is Furniture Sharehouse?

Furniture Sharehouse, Westchester's Furniture Bank, collects gently-used furniture from the public at our warehouse at the Westchester County Airport and re-distributes it free of charge to needy families referred by social service agencies. Since 2007, we have provided over 67,000 items of free furniture to more than 11,500 individuals, helping them fill their empty apartments and rebuild their lives with dignity.

www.furnituresharehouse.org.

What purpose would be served by a Furniture Collection Bin in our municipality's yard?

We obtain most of our furniture by doing individual residential pick-ups around the County, which is expensive. We are looking for ways to increase the amount of inventory we collect while minimizing trucking costs. If we are able to collect furniture in your municipal yard from residents, we can make one trip to collect a full load of furniture instead of many individual trips.

What benefit will be provided to our municipality and its residents?

Your residents will be pleased to have an easy, local alternative place to bring their unwanted furniture and will be happy to know that their furniture is going to help a needy family instead of into the waste stream. Your municipality will have less furniture to pick up curbside and will be reinforcing its commitment to recycling.

What kind of container is needed?

Clean, 20' enclosed container with door access wide enough to accommodate larger furniture items; would need to be able to be locked.

Who provides the container?

Furniture Sharehouse does not have the budget to buy or rent a container, so we ask participating municipalities to obtain the donation/use of a suitable container. These bins typically cost a few thousand dollars and are eligible for 50% state reimbursement by the NYSDEC, under their [Municipal Waste Reduction and Recycling Program \(MWR&R\)-Capital Projects Grant](#). We are also currently working with the County DEF to select an approved vendor.

What types of furniture will be collected?

FS accepts moderately-sized basic home furniture in good condition. A detailed list of what we do and don't accept is found on our website. We do accept used mattresses and upholstered items that are pest-free and in good condition, but if accepting these items at your facility is an issue, these could be excluded from the list of locally-accepted items.

Who will screen the donations and how?

We would provide on-site training for yard personnel so that they can advise residents which items are acceptable for placement in the container and which are not. Drop-off procedures and hours will be tailored to suit your yard operations.

How often will the container be emptied and by whom?

We ask your yard personnel to contact our pick-up service when the container is full and we will come and empty the container. At the time of pick-up, any items which our driver deems unacceptable will be left for disposal by yard personnel.

Does Furniture Sharehouse have any municipal collection bins in place?

We currently have bins in Larchmont/Mamaroneck and Tuckahoe

Questions: Kate Bialo, Executive Director
bialok@aol.com 914.661.7259



Office & Mailing Address:

P. O. Box 702
Larchmont, NY 10538
Voicemail: 914.834.1294

Warehouse Address:

Loop Road, Building #3
Westchester County Airport
White Plains, NY 10604

www.furnituresharehouse.org

[date]

[Name of Municipal Official]

[Municipality]

RE: FURNITURE COLLECTION BIN

Dear _____:

Furniture Sharehouse, Westchester's Furniture Bank, collects gently-used furniture from the public and distributes it free of charge directly to Westchester families in need. Since 2007, we have provided over 54,000 items of free furniture to more than 10,500 individuals to help fill their empty apartments and begin to rebuild their lives – people moving out of homeless shelters, escaping domestic violence or recovering from personal or natural disasters.

Furniture Sharehouse helps over 460 families per year and relies on public donations of furniture to keep enough inventory on hand. We are a low-budget operation and our biggest expense is trucking fees to collect the furniture from donors around the county, so we are always looking for ways to increase the amount of furniture that is dropped off to us at central locations in order to save expensive trucking costs, as well as to increase the convenience for donors.

Towards this end, we are actively seeking collaborations with Westchester municipalities to place a furniture collection bin in their recycling yard for residents to drop-off gently-used furniture. We currently have Collection Bins in Larchmont and Tuckahoe. These bins have been a great success, enabling us to collect a truck's worth of furniture at once when the bins are full, with great cost-savings over driving around the County doing individual pick-ups. The bins are also beneficial to the municipalities because they reinforce their commitment to recycling, and provide local residents with a convenient place to recycle their gently-used furniture, reducing bulk waste pick-ups.

I would be happy to talk with you about setting up a collection bin and would welcome you to visit our warehouse at the County Airport to see what we do and how we do it. Attached are a Proposal, Donation Guidelines, and a great article about Furniture Sharehouse. Please contact me at 914.661.7259 if you would like to pursue this collaboration. Thank you.

Very truly yours,

Kate Bialo
Executive Director



Office & Mailing Address:

P. O. Box 702
Larchmont, NY 10538
Voicemail: 914.834.1294

Warehouse Address:

Loop Road, Building #3
Westchester County Airport
White Plains, NY 10604

www.furnituresharehouse.org

April 19, 2018

RE: FURNITURE COLLECTION BIN

Dear Sustainable Westchester Member Municipality:

Furniture Sharehouse, Westchester's Furniture Bank, collects gently-used furniture from the public and distributes it free of charge directly to Westchester families in need. Since 2007, we have provided over 68,000 items of free furniture to more than 12,500 individuals to help fill their empty apartments and begin to rebuild their lives – people moving out of homeless shelters, escaping domestic violence or recovering from personal or natural disasters.

Furniture Sharehouse helps over 460 families per year and relies on public donations of furniture to keep enough inventory on hand. We are a low-budget operation and our biggest expense is trucking fees to collect the furniture from donors around the county, so we are always looking for ways to increase the amount of furniture that is dropped off to us at central locations in order to save expensive trucking costs, as well as to increase the convenience for donors.

Towards this end, we are actively seeking collaborations with Westchester municipalities to place a furniture collection bin in their recycling yard for residents to drop-off gently-used furniture. We currently have Collection Bins in Larchmont and Tuckahoe, and the Village of Scarsdale will be installing one this spring. These bins have been a great success, enabling us to collect a truck's worth of furniture with one trip when the bins are full, with great cost-savings over driving around the County doing individual pick-ups. The bins are also beneficial to the municipalities because they reinforce their commitment to recycling and provide local residents with a convenient place to recycle their gently-used furniture, reducing bulk waste pick-ups.

I would be happy to talk with you about setting up a collection bin and would welcome you to visit our warehouse at the County Airport to see what we do and how we do it. Attached are a Proposal, Donation Guidelines, and a Fact Sheet about Furniture Sharehouse. Please contact me at 914.661.7259 or bialok@aol.com if you would like to pursue this collaboration. Thank you.

Very truly yours,

Kate Bialo
Executive Director

A sharing place turns empty rooms into furnished homes

BY JOHN GOLDEN
jgolden@westfairinc.com

In the heavy pelting rain of the December nor'easter, Kate Bialo met us outside a warehouse building that once served as a homeless shelter on the grounds of the Westchester County Airport. It stands behind a permanently parked tractor-trailer with "Al's Moving" lettered on its side, a navigational guide for first-time visitors to Furniture Sharehouse.

"We have no heat," said Bialo, who led us to a small rear office in the county-owned building where a tiny space heater did little to remove the flesh-penetrating chill. Our coats stayed on. "You have to be a particularly hardy person to be a volunteer here. We also don't have a toilet. We have a porta-potty." Its green-sided shelter in the storm was visible from an office window. "A porta-potty in February is tough."

The volunteers at Furniture Sharehouse – a nonprofit whose founder and executive director is Kate Bialo – supply comfort and warmth in other forms, and human dignity as well, to the needy clients who shop there in the company of their agency case worker or victim advocate and a personal shopper from the group's ranks of volunteers. As Elizabeth M. wrote in a thank-you letter for the furniture donations her family had received, "Now my apartment looks like someone lives here."

A grateful social worker from Westchester Jewish Community Services wrote of that comfort and dignity given her client when she told Furniture Sharehouse staff, "Lou has gone from having only four folding chairs to a house to live in." Lou himself said the help given him on his visit to the warehouse "was instrumental in relieving the stress that I normally experience due to my housing situation."

For Nefylena Vernon Edwards, whose family "lost a lot from a house fire" in Mount Vernon, the free furniture and shopping experience at the warehouse "turned my fears into joy" and left her "overwhelmed" and teary-eyed. "Hopefully in the future when we see brighter days, we would like to donate to your company," she wrote.

"Let it be known the furniture builds not homes but families," the thankful client was moved to proclaim.

One-third of the clients with shopping appointments at the dimly lit warehouse are single mothers, Bialo said. Elderly residents of the county and victims of domestic violence, fire and other disasters also come in. "At least 60 percent of our clients are people who are coming out of shelters," some of them military veterans, she said. Yonkers residents, some of whom take two buses to get to the county airport, make up the largest share of clientele, followed by Mount Vernon residents.

"They all have one basic thing in common," said



Bialo, a Larchmont resident. "They're living in empty apartments. They can't afford to buy furniture."

"It's a hidden need," she said. "It's something people don't really think about."

An attorney no longer in practice, Bialo thought about it during her time as president and community grants coordinator of the Junior League of Westchester on the Sound. Social service workers told her of their frustration that used furniture left outside their agencies by the charity-minded could not be stored and were hauled away to dumps or carted off by scavengers before they could be distributed to needy clients. Bialo thought that a shameful waste – and acted on that thought.

In 2005, she began developing her idea of a shared warehouse where donations of the large furniture could be collected and freely distributed to county residents lacking in their domestic lives what most of us take for granted. She learned about furniture banks and the National Furniture Bank Association, of which Furniture Sharehouse is a member. The startup nonprofit received grants of \$20,000 from Westchester County's emergency shelter program and \$30,000 from the Junior League of Westchester on the Sound for its first year of operation.

Bialo searched about two years for space for the recycling operation. In 2007, Furniture Sharehouse leased the 6,500-square-foot warehouse from the county and began collecting donations. Volunteers celebrated its grand opening soon after a nor'easter in April that year left Westchester a federal flood disaster area.

Bialo opened a temporary distribution center in flood-stricken Mamaroneck and partnered with the local Washingtonville Housing Alliance and Hispanic Resource Center to replace furniture that those agencies' clients lost in the flooding.

"That was kind of a beginning," she said. "We were able to help 65 families in 10 days with furniture." The new nonprofit in town also used a \$10,000 flood relief grant from the Westchester Community Foundation to buy new mattresses for families.

"That's the one thing we never have enough of – beds," Bialo said. "That is our biggest need."

It is not an open-door policy that Furniture Sharehouse operates by. Rather, about 30 nonprofit

agencies in the county pay an annual membership fee of \$150 each to bring their clients to the one-stop furniture shopping center. A \$25 application fee is paid by the client or a member agency on the client's behalf. And though Furniture Sharehouse is the only organization in Westchester to put no price on the furniture selected by clients, it does charge fees of \$75 for curbside delivery and \$150 for its contract driver to carry the furniture into a home. Either the client or the agency must pay that charge.

Some clients cancel delivery because they can't afford the fee, Bialo said. "While it seems it's not that much money, it's definitely a challenge for clients to come up with it."

The warehouse is open every Wednesday and Thursday morning. To encourage donor drop-offs at the airport site that spare the nonprofit the time and expense of home pick-ups, the warehouse also is open the third Saturday of every month.

"We're open two hours," Bialo said. "We're able to do five to six families in two hours."

"It's also more efficient in the wintertime – because it's so damned cold."

For clients, it's "once-in-a-lifetime" shopping at Furniture Sharehouse, Bialo said. No return visits for additional furniture are allowed.

"Our problem is, we have a waiting list that is about six weeks long. We feel we have to help the families that haven't been helped before," she said.

Many have been helped in their hidden yet urgent need. Bialo said the nonprofit assisted 450 families in 2013. Since its start, it has helped about 8,500 people, about half of whom are children.

"We have given away 49,000 pieces of furniture since we've been open. That's 49,000 pieces of furniture that would have gone into the waste stream. We've given 49,000 pieces of furniture new life."

The nonprofit's service to the county's needy was recognized this year by Impact100 Westchester, a year-old women's philanthropic group, which awarded Furniture Sharehouse a \$100,000 grant to buy a custom-built delivery truck for its operation. The new diesel truck – a manufacturer's delay in building an 18-foot box for it has held up shipment – will allow larger loads to be picked up on each trip, "which will increase our efficiency," Bialo said.

"We're going to organize – I won't call it a visibility tour, but a new truck tour," she said.

Dave Vitullo, Furniture Sharehouse's busy driver, stepped out of the storm and into the office as we spoke.

"I've gotta unload yesterday's," he told Bialo.

"Any beds in that batch?" she asked.

"Three twins," he said.

It made for a good haul on a lousy day in Westchester.