

Designer deals are foundation for women's charity

By VALERI FURST

It is an annual ritual. People lined up through the halls of the Mandel Jewish Community Center in Beachwood, waiting hours for the doors to open at 10 a.m. for the National Council of Jewish Women's Designer Dress Days. The four-day event is a fundraiser that offers new or gently-worn women's designer clothing, jewelry, handbags, furs and fashionable accessories at very low prices. The bargains are good enough to cause Georgeta Birsan of Westlake to wake up at 4 in the morning of the first day and drive across town to be first in line, a position she has held the past three years.

The event was last week.

"I love designer dresses and clothing and this is the place where I can find great items at a good price that I can afford. It is definitely worth getting up at the crack of dawn. I will spend about \$600 to \$700 on clothing would cost so much more in the stores," Mrs. Birsan said.

The fundraiser is in its 47th year and raises hundreds of thousands of dollars for programs supported by the National Council of Jewish Women in Cleveland. Event Co-chairwoman Wendy Elconin of Beachwood said last year the group raised \$250,000

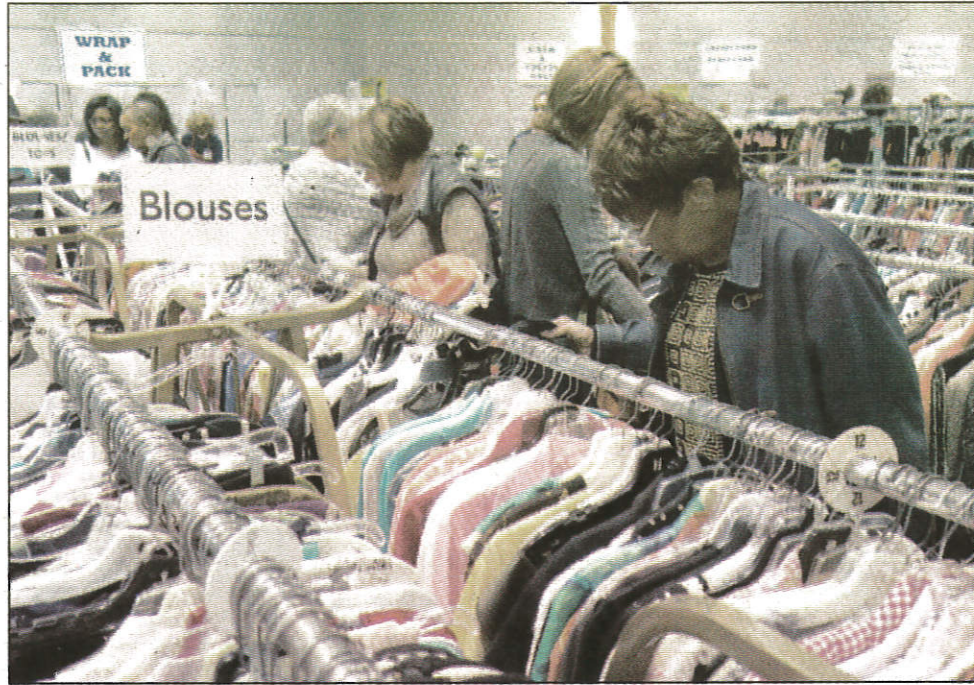


Photo by Valeri Furst

Last week, women waited for hours outside of the Mandel Jewish Community Center for designer bargains at the 47th annual National Council of Jewish Women's Designer Dress Days. Last year, the annual fundraiser raised \$250,000.

which helped fund a variety of activities including literacy programs, assisting foster and kinship care families, and educating

people about issues of concern including voting rights and human trafficking.

Mrs. Elconin became involved with the

group 37 years ago, volunteering with an entertainment group that performed at senior centers and nursing homes around the area. When she retired, Mrs. Elconin decided to take on a leadership role and became more involved with Designer Dress Days.

"I love making an impact on the community and National Council of Jewish Women is a worthy organization that does so much and involves so many wonderful people," Mrs. Elconin said. More than 280 volunteers come in to help out, she added.

Plans for the 2016 Designer Dress Days starts the day after this one closed. Co-chairwoman Michele Kaminsky of Beachwood has been running the event for five years and says donations have already started coming in that were too late for this year's show.

"We have to stop adding items about a week before the show so we can organize and price everything. We have about 7,000 pieces of clothing and also purses, scarves, jewelry, and furs. People love that they can pay \$45 for something that was \$800 in the store and also feel like they are doing something good for the community," Mrs. Kaminsky said.

Donations are being accepted for next year's Designer's Dress Days. For more information, call 216-378-2204.