



## More books, more shelves, and a new roof for Gently Used Books

On June 1, 2005 Ramona DeWalt found her dream coming true. After 13 years as a bookseller with *Borders Books and Music* in the Lancaster and Reading stores, she was opening her own book shop in the Amity Square Shopping Plaza in Douglassville.

This would be a book-store very different from the style she had grown up with. *Gently Used Books'* 1,100 square feet were stocked with only 15,000 books, and they were ALL used, though only gently.

What did carry over into Ramona's new store was a clean, brightly lit, and comfortable shopping environment. Neatly organized and displayed rows of custom built shelves were brightly painted to show off the colorful book covers and spines in the easiest shopping manner possible. A used book store never looked so good!

However, over the next two

years an amazing thing happened. Mona's simple and easy to understand trade in policy gave many booklovers the opportunity to buy a book at half or less the cover price, read it, and trade it in for book credit to buy another title even cheaper.

Her willingness to take donations of any books even if she personally could not sell them meant book-lovers didn't have to see their former treasures tossed in the trash. Ramona also passes a few books on to her husband's hobby, an Ebay Store called Gently Used Books Plus, and others to other book re-users like libraries, churches, or Goodwill Industries.

The result? Mona's business grew faster than she or her husband Pastor Ken DeWalt of Hope Church in Douglassville ever imagined. By the end of 2006, with an in stock inventory doubled to about 30,000 books

and a more-than-cramped quarters, Ramona began to look for a new and larger location for her books.

After much searching she found a near perfect site, the former *Wine and Spirit Shoppe* location in the Douglassville Shopping Center. The State Liquor Store had moved recently into much larger quarters in the newest building in the center, and their old location, right between Redner's Market and A-Z Video was a wonderful place to locate a book store. The location also offered a generous 2,900 square feet of elbow room to move what became by opening day, Oct. 16, 2007, an inventory in excess of 40,000 books.

One of the real attractions of the old *Gently Used Books* was its Children's Book Room. The new store has a Children's Room five times the size of the original. The adult fiction/non-fiction and sale areas are both almost twice the size of the entire former store.

Step stools line the aisles for ease of reach those upper shelves. Folding and rocking chairs are conveniently placed to allow the occasional rest of a weary browser's feet. Large windows let in the sun, and the clean, well lit atmosphere was never cleaner or better lit.

Many former customers congratulate Mona's move, however it was the opening week's crowd



Thousands of books line the colorful shelves and walls at Gently Used Books' new location in the Douglassville Shopping Center. Stop in today for a new book to read, or trade in that stack of books you've already read for some new ones.

of first timers who assured her tripled bills would be paid on time.

Ramona now has four part time booksellers on staff; Elysa, Kathy, Stephanie and Audrey. Each of these dedicated book-lovers are trained to not only help you find what you are looking for, but also take down information on any books you desire that they don't currently have and efficiently contact you if they do come in from another booklover trading in titles, sometimes within the very same day.

Some customers, after walking around what for many is an entirely new concept in book selling, might ask Mona where she goes from here. Her first comment is a hardy, "Nowhere!" since she and about 20 friends are still recovering from the weekend move of 40,000 books to the new location. But after a moment she'll usually just smile and say, "Excuse me, but I've got

to help those customers with their boxes of books they want to trade in."

There seems no doubt that *Gently Used Books* is in Douglassville to stay, and who knows how

soon Ramona will be wondering where to stock her eighty thousandth book?

Find Gently Used Books, Douglassville, online at [www.gentlyusedbooks.com](http://www.gentlyusedbooks.com).



Ramona DeWalt, owner of Gently Used Books, tidies the book shelves in her new store.



Photo by Ralph Levengood

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