

PRESS RELEASE

The Guided Cage, Westchester's only non-profit gift shop, will close its doors after nearly 41 years in business. No closing date has been announced, but it is anticipated that the shop may close by Labor Day and at the latest by September 30, when its current lease expires.

The shop's going-out-of-business sale will begin June 1, with all merchandise initially discounted 20% off the marked price. During the sale, store hours will be 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. Mondays and Saturdays, and 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Tuesday through Friday. The shop is closed on Sundays.

A fixture in Westchester since 1975, the shop was created by a group of volunteers with the Westchester Mental Health Guild (WMHG), who decided to start a boutique to raise funds to assist the Airport Marina Counseling Service. The first shop location was in the southwest corner of the Loyola Theater building, at 8610 S. Sepulveda. That location quickly became too small, and the shop moved to another location at 86th and Sepulveda. When the Ralph's grocery store relocated to its current location, the Guided Cage moved along with it to 8917-B S. Sepulveda.

WMHG Co-President and Guided Cage volunteer Ylla De Leon attributed the shop's closing to three factors: 1) changes in customers' shopping habits, with many people now doing much of their shopping through on-line stores; 2) the diminished use of the U.S. mail to send greeting cards, reducing sales of cards; and 3) reduced numbers of volunteers available to operate the shop, making it more difficult to staff the store and do the behind-the-scenes work to keep it stocked and running. Ms. De Leon said "Our efforts simply are not earning enough to pay our overhead and to generate sufficient funds for Airport Marina Counseling Service. Instead, we hope that our volunteers will be able to focus on other efforts to fundraise for AMCS that we anticipate will be more productive."

During its 41 years, the Guided Cage has always featured new merchandise, including greeting cards, jewelry, gifts, and home décor, as well as handcrafted items, such as afghans, hats, scarves and dishtowels, made by its volunteers.

All the proceeds from the shop, nearly one-half million dollars, have supported the Airport Marina Counseling Service, a private, non-profit, community-based mental health clinic that has been serving Westside and South Bay areas since 1962. Its mission is two-fold: to provide affordable psychotherapy services, and to train mental health professionals. The clinic provides counseling to individuals, families, couples, and groups in our local community at affordable fees based on income.

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