

CLARITY

“Here Come The Bridal Gowns”

Geraldine Brower already had a full plate serving as director of development for 176-year-old Sheltering Arms Childrens Service, which serves 3,000 disadvantaged kids and their families each year. But several years ago, when the New York City-based non-profit organization came up short in the funds department, Geraldine created “The Bridal Garden,” a charming boutique that sells designer wedding gowns at a discounted price. The idea came when the chairman of the board attended a wedding, and upon seeing the bride’s expensive gown, wondered if Sheltering Arms could somehow tap into big bridal budgets.

Geraldine confesses she wasn’t sure where to start to put such a program together, but says “I feel like a little angel just sat on my shoulder and said, ‘Do this! Do this!’ And it has all worked out.”

Most of the dresses come from local designers who donate their overstock, but individuals can donate too (and get a tax deduction.) Proceeds from all sales go to Sheltering Arms programs. Last year the boutique generated over \$150,000, which helped finance programs in day care, foster, adoption and special education.

“At first I was putting in a lot of extra hours,” says Geraldine, who manages the store, solicits donations, and handles advertising. “It’s certainly been worth it. Not only are we helping children, we’re also helping brides who are thrilled to find such a good deal.”