

N.S. 'superstore' gives new life to old books

By **DAVID LISCIO**
THE DAILY ITEM

DANVERS — Make it simple and inexpensive and they will come.

That's the business plan behind the successful Used Book Superstore, with stores at 139 Endicott St. in Danvers and 256 Cambridge St. in Burlington, as well as a public warehouse in Lawrence. Readers flock to the stores for their well-known bargains and easy pricing structure. In Danvers, soft-cover books are \$1.99 and hardbacks \$2.99. Simple as that.

The stores also sell oversize books for slightly more, along with DVDs, CDs and audio books.

The concept was the brainchild of Bob Ticehurst, who pursued an education in business and eight years ago founded Got Books, the parent company of the used book outlets.

"I sort of fell into it," he said. "I was working in Boston and got this great offer on books, which I then started selling to the people at work. I also started selling on the Internet. It didn't take long for me to realize there was a need for a big used bookstore out there."

According to Ticehurst, the venture has proved a win-win for all involved, since he turns

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a profit, customers go away pleased, and a variety of non-profit organizations benefit from the sales. "I love people and I love books," he said. "Every book we sell is donated to us, either by individuals or organizations. We have drop-off locations throughout New England. People can call us to arrange pickup, even if it's

only a small box of books."

Donors looking for tax benefits from their contributions can get the necessary forms from some of the drop-off locations. "We can't give out the forms at the store because there's no way for us to know which group is benefiting from book sales," Ticehurst said. "But there are five or six locations listed on our Web site where you can get a receipt for your contributions."

Books in the store aisles are sorted and arranged by category, unlike the Lawrence warehouse, which operates more like a garage sale, requiring customers to pick through mounts of volumes.

On the third Thursday of each month, customers can participate in Books for Troops, held at the Burlington store from 5-8 p.m. Volunteers and shoppers can help pick out books to fill care packages for area troops stationed overseas.

"We've pledged to send 25,000 books in 2009 to local troops," said Ticehurst. "We regularly give books to various groups in need, including local schools and libraries, the New Orleans relief efforts, and recovering soldiers at Walter Reed Army Medical Center."

Teachers also get a special deal, 20 percent off all purchases every Wednesday from 10 a.m. to 8 p.m., presuming they can show proper school identification.

Ticehurst, 31, founder and president of Got Books, was a member of the U.S. Marines Reserve, serving as a military recruiter and a firefighter, when a military connection gave him an opportunity to purchase books cheaply and sell them on Internet auction

sites. He ran the business from his parents' basement. What started as a hobby soon became a full-time occupation. The business rapidly grew, forcing him to relocate to a 600-square-foot office in Arlington. Employees were hired. Book donations came from many sources. Ticehurst hit paydirt when Northeastern University saw a newspaper story about his book business and informed him of approximately 50,000 volumes for which the college no longer had use and was willing to sell — cheaply. A partnership was formed through which both Ticehurst and the college profited.

By 2004, Ticehurst had to find larger quarters, a warehouse capable of holding many thousands of books. He found it in Billerica, close to his home. Got Books outgrew that facility as well and continued to spill over into other quarters in North Reading. By 2005, the company had 40 employees and a fleet of four vans for picking up book donations.

Municipal recycling programs were alerted and they, too, became sources of book donations. "The mission of Got Books is to find the best use for every donated item we receive," said Ticehurst. "We're able to reuse books while also fund raising for local groups."

As Tim Price, recycling coordinator for the Holyoke Department of Public Works explained, "We don't have the money to pay people to remove hard covers from books, so they end up in the trash. Now these useful books will have a second life. It's a win-win situation for everyone."

Pam Irwin, recycling coordi-



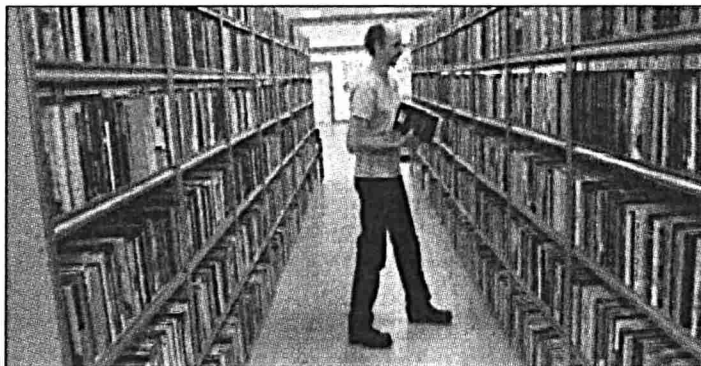
nator in Danvers, offered a similar assessment. "Because the Danvers Earth Day drew such a significant turnout, Got Books first van quickly filled and was seamlessly replaced with another. This truly helped make my two-day event go off without a glitch," she said.

Last June, Got Books relocated to the warehouse on Glenn Street in Lawrence, home to its corporate offices and Charity Book Sale.

So what does Ticehurst read among the thousands of volumes that come into his stores?

"I started out with 'The Firm' by John Grisham, and 'Along Came a Spider' by James Patterson. Those are the books that really got me interested. I just finished the new Warren Buffett book, 'The Snowball — Warren Buffett and the Business of Life'. Usually I read one work of fiction and then one non-fiction, just to change it up and keep it interesting," he said.

The Danvers store is open Monday through Saturday, 10 a.m. to 8 p.m., and Sunday from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. For more information, call (978) 762-READ or go online to www.usedbooksuperstore.com. Got Books does not accept donations of encyclopedias, magazines, newspapers or catalogs.



ITEM PHOTO / OWEN O'ROURKE

Used Book Superstore manager Michael Mazzenga keeps the store's shelves filled. The business is located at 139 Endicott St., Danvers.