

# A Note from Executive Director, Vicki Hickman

## The Girl in the Gold Frame

Last week I found myself wandering through the Variety Sale— our own little Twin Towers bazaar that quietly hums twice a week with treasures from lives well lived. If you've ever browsed those tables, you know the feeling. China sets stacked neatly beside crystal bowls. Framed landscapes hanging on the wall. Jewelry displays. Holiday décor. The occasional mystery appliance that no one quite remembers how to use.

And then there was her...A portrait of a young woman in a simple cream dress, framed in gold. She stood very straight, hands folded carefully in her lap, eyes steady and calm. There was something about her expression — not smiling exactly, but not stern either. Composed. Thoughtful. Almost as if she knew something the rest of us were still figuring out.

She was high on the wall in the back room near a stack of empty picture frames, which somehow felt appropriate. New memories waiting for photographs... and here she was, a memory herself, waiting for a new wall.

I stood there longer than I expected.

Who was she? Who first hung her in their home? Was she a grandmother? An aunt? Someone's great love? Did she preside over a formal dining room, quietly observing holiday dinners and birthday cakes? Did children run past her frame without ever really noticing her steady gaze?

And how did she arrive here, priced at \$75, resting under fluorescent lights on a Tuesday afternoon?

The Variety Sale is a practical thing. It helps us steward resources well. It clears space. It gives cherished items a second life. And yet, walking through it can stir something deeper.

Every teacup once held conversation.

Every serving dish once anchored a family meal.

Every framed photograph once marked a moment someone didn't want to forget.

Objects, it turns out, are quiet witnesses. They have watched proposals and arguments, Sunday roasts and late-night ice cream straight from the carton. They have been dusted carefully, packed reluctantly, handed down lovingly — and eventually, sometimes, released. There is something both melancholy and beautiful about that.

In our community, we understand this better than most. Twin Towers is a place of transition — not loss, but movement. Movement from one chapter to another. From large homes to smaller spaces. From keeping everything... to choosing what matters most.

And perhaps that is the gentle lesson of the girl in the gold frame.

At some point in life, the things we once polished and protected become less important than the people gathered around them. The china matters less than the laughter. The portrait matters less than the story. Still, I couldn't help but smile at the thought that she may soon hang in someone else's home — quietly observing a brand-new generation. Perhaps she'll preside over a kitchen instead of a formal dining room this time. Perhaps she'll watch over game nights instead of formal teas. Or perhaps she will simply remind someone — as she reminded me — that every life leaves traces. That beauty lasts longer than we expect. That even when possessions change hands, the stories don't disappear. They simply continue.

So, the next time you wander through the Variety Sale, pause for a moment. Pick up the teacup. Study the painting. Wonder about the life it witnessed. You may find yourself feeling just a little nostalgic. And maybe, just maybe, grateful for the chapters you are writing right now.