

# Sharing Tree moves colorful world to Midtown

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COUNCIL ON CULTURE & ARTS

Assorted curios grow from The Sharing Tree's ceiling and adorn the wall — curtain strands made with vintage '60s flashcards and boxes, a dream catcher fashioned out of an old bicycle wheel. It's clear to see from the center's decor that artist and Executive Director Carly Sinnadurai is a colorist who enjoys exaggerated hues, contrasting colors, and bright images.

She looks out for the quirkiest items that are donated to the reuse center to repurpose them. Florida State's science department donated files that were quickly remade into Sinnadurai's collection along with numerous other artifacts.

"I love the weird and the wacky," says Sinnadurai. "I also like to work big because I think that big is bold and that it can speak volumes."

With her store newly relocated to midtown at 218 East Third Ave., and in its seventh year, Sinnadurai says she's more excited than ever to expand the definition of what The Sharing Tree stands for by introducing more entry points for community involvement. In the New Year, the business will hone in on more experience-based activities. The superintendent, mayor, and county commissioners will kick off the facility's Reinvention Party on Thursday, Jan. 12, with a ribbon-cutting ceremony, and Sinnadurai will release a brand new class and workshop schedule.

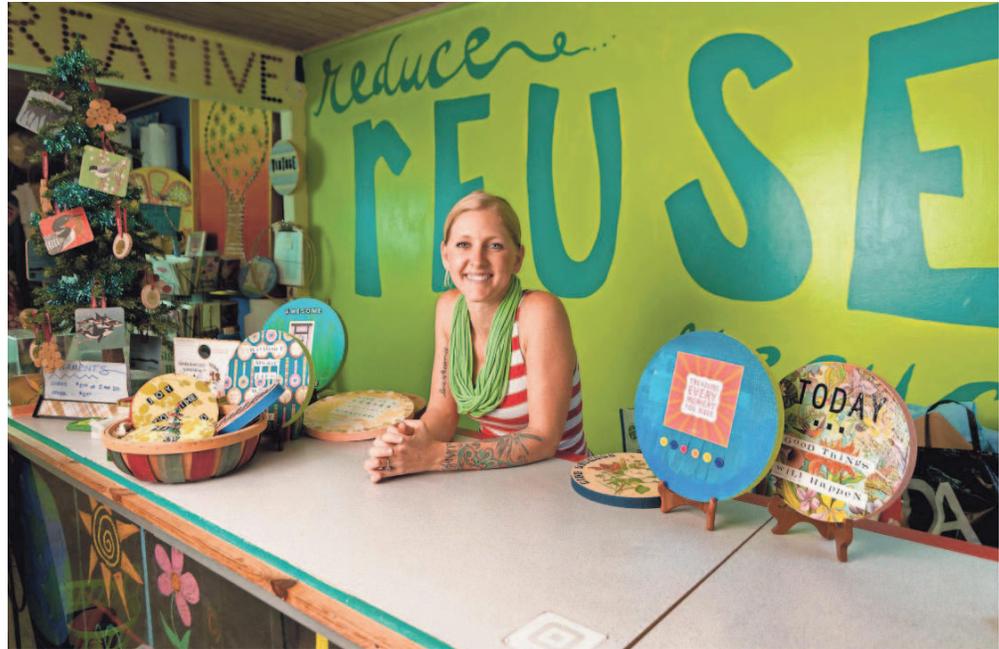
Offerings will range from classes for preschoolers to seniors, more summer, spring and winter camps will be made available, and new opportunities with a work enrichment program would allow state agencies and departments to think of The Sharing Tree for their next team development activity. Additionally, more higher-end items will be available in the "Junktion" gallery, where six reuse artists have work for sale. Most importantly, Sinnadurai wants to dispel misconceptions that purchasing items in the center will take away from teachers. Opening the door to The Sharing Tree's storage warehouse, there's an endless array of overflowing bins, holding everything from wrapping paper to shelving units and no end of supplies in sight.

Sinnadurai attended the Academy of Art in San Francisco where she gravitated towards sculpture and dumpster diving, always seeking ways to repurpose the discarded. One of her biggest contributions to the city's landscape was a giant lizard mural that can still be seen on Mission Street.

Following the sunshine to Florida State University, she earned a degree in Art Education. Sinnadurai has worked on murals around town like the Centre of Tallahassee's Urban Food Market and Milano's restaurant, taught classes at the LeMoyné Center for the Visual Arts and made sets for Pyramid Studios' productions. Her greatest art assemblage has been Tallahassee's only nonprofit reuse center, The Sharing Tree.

"The Sharing Tree in itself is my favorite piece of art to work on," smiles Sinnadurai. "You look around and can see art examples everywhere adorning the walls. I love that you can share a positive environmental message through art."

Her dream began in 2009 in a 400-square-foot space in Railroad Square. Earning the attention of the community, the local government and the school board joined with Sinnadurai to establish The Sharing Tree's education-focused mission — collecting supplies to donate to teacher's classrooms, giving workshops, and being an artistic resource for the community all while



Carly Sinnadurai will hold The Sharing Tree Reinvention Party at the new Midtown location on Jan. 12.

SPENCER HOPKINS



## If you go

**What:** The Sharing Tree's Reinvention Party  
**When:** 4-6 p.m., Thursday, Jan. 12  
**Where:** 218 East Third Avenue  
**Cost:** Free  
**Contact:** For more information, call 850-264-4035 or visit [www.thesharingtreefl.org](http://www.thesharingtreefl.org).

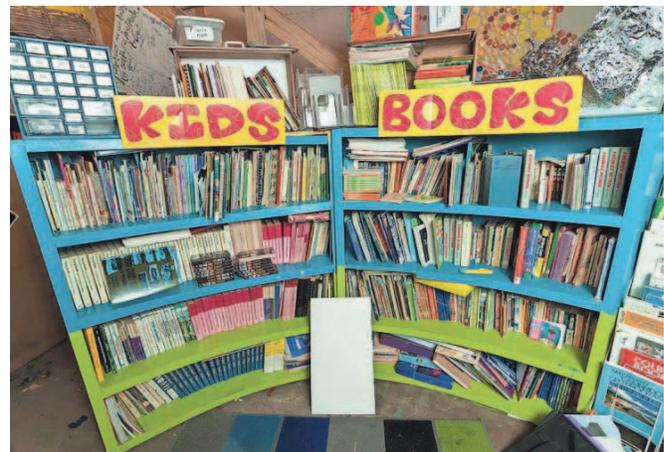
diverting materials from landfills.

Inside The Sharing Tree, Sinnadurai uses functional art to inspire costumers with the store's materials. She says out of the many items she sorts through each day, she has an equally high amount of project ideas, but must be selective about what she can accomplish in a week. Her multi-faceted process has Sinnadurai thinking of what she wants to convey to the Tallahassee community that might be eye-catching or insightful.

"It's beneficial to be an artist in this position and have an eye for design," says Sinnadurai. "A lot of reuse centers have stuff in big bins, and we have that aspect too but it's less attractive to the standard shopper. If they immediately see potential in the material they're more likely to participate in the creative reuse experience."

Every summer Sinnadurai and her sister visited Art Scraps, a reuse center in Minneapolis where they would fill their bag for five dollars with unique treasures.

Growing up on a farm, she says the concept of recycling was a way of life and her mother served as her inspiration with her skilled mastery of reuse. Sinnadurai's mother taught her to sew, helped her with science projects, and even made Halloween costumes from scratch every year from Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles to Minnesota Vikings cheerleaders. Now a mother herself, Sinnadurai has continued this tradition,



CARLY SINNADURAI

The Sharing Tree recently moved to Third Avenue in Midtown.

constructing a fully functional Transformers costume for her son, and allowing him to find his own artistry.

"He's immersed in art all the time," says Sinnadurai, showing off a coffee creamer bottle remade into a snowman. "He's a builder so he'll pick up anything here in the store. We have a kid zone inspired by him because many times kids go into stores that say 'don't touch,' but here I say go ahead and touch."

Under the artistic moniker Cycle Girl Salvage, Sinnadurai's signature pieces are wooden circles discarded by a local company that are transformed into encouraging messengers with inspirational quotes. Showcased in The Sharing Tree's "Junktion" gallery, Sinnadurai uses all kinds of mixed media, salvaging vintage images, seashells, corks, bottle caps, glass, and more, to create incomparable works of art.

"I think anything has a second purpose," says Sinnadurai. "I love giving workshops where I just lay out a buffet of art materials and say go to town. At

first, everyone is super intimidated and nobody moves, then a half hour later, they're making their very own individual sculptures. It's a really empowering process to watch."

Her favorite classes to teach are children's birthday parties and adult classes. The holiday ornaments workshop is always a hit, as is yard art where plastic bottles become permanent flower installations, which Sinnadurai showcases in The Sharing Tree's own community garden.

"I'm excited to share what the tree team and I have decided to do," smiles Sinnadurai. "I want people to think of us as a vintage shop for the creative with brand new and reuse items. We also want to re-celebrate this space in midtown since we haven't had a grand opening for this building yet, and I think it's pretty grand."

Amanda Sieradzki is the feature writer for the Council on Culture & Arts. COCA is the capital area's umbrella agency for arts and culture ([www.tallahasseearts.org](http://www.tallahasseearts.org)).