

# Plato's Closet takes **Sting** out of teen back-to-school shopping

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REFLECTIONS WRITER

On a Saturday afternoon, 16-year-old Abraham Romero emerges from inside a fitting room, wearing a khaki-colored shirt displaying the words "Abercrombie" in light blue script.

But Abraham isn't at the mall, shopping at Abercrombie & Fitch, and he'll pay no more than \$5 for a shirt that normally would cost around \$30.

"That's what's nice about Plato's Closet," said Elida Romero, his mother. "Some of the brands teenagers want are really expensive, and here you can get them in good condition at a really good price."

At 3374 Texas 6, Plato's Closet sells gently used brand-name clothing, shoes, and accessories for teens at discount prices. The store also pays cash for those who want to sell their items, on the condition that they are clean, without holes, and are not stained or faded.

Inside the store are size- and color-coordinated racks with shirts, tube and tank tops, jeans, capris, and slacks from retailers such as the Gap, Express, American Eagle, Hollister and Old Navy.

A rack labeled "Designer Jeans" holds True Religion, Joe's Jeans, Diesel, Citizens of Humanity, and Rock and Republic — brands found at such retailers as Nordstrom, Neiman Marcus or Saks Fifth Avenue.

"We look for style, and we'll buy and sell what's been seen at the mall during the

last year," Manager Shenelle Richards said. "We see customers from their teens to their 20s. Some moms even shop here."

The Sugar Land location is one of three owned by Ann Whitton, a Katy resident who learned about Plato's Closet from a shopping trip with her two young daughters.

"We lived in Singapore for seven years, and we came to the States every summer to buy an entire wardrobe," Whitton said. "It was breaking the bank, so we looked for an alternative."

When Whitton learned about Plato's Closet, she said she liked the idea of a resale store that sold quality, trendy clothing targeted primarily to teens.

"When I learned that it was a franchise, I decided to pursue it actively," Whitton said. "I had always been into fashion, and when it was time move back (to the States), I wanted work close to home."

Whitton opened her first Plato's Closet, 577 South Mason Road in Katy, in 2005; the Sugar Land location in 2006; and one on 19028 Gulf Freeway in the Baybrook Shopping Center in June.

Whitton's daughters, Allison, 15, and Kirsten, 18, are Plato's Closet employees. Her husband, Norman, an oil consultant, does the stores' marketing and accounting duties.

"The whole family really is involved," Whitton said. "And the girls and I really do like fashion."

Best sellers for women are graphic T-shirts, nautical-themed items and extra-long T-shirts that can be used for layering. Designer denim always is in style, and Whitton cautions against bringing in those with rhinestones or embellishment.

"Those aren't selling as much anymore," she said.

Logo and graphic T-shirts are popular with guys, as are distressed jeans or those with a time-worn look.

"Feel free to ask anyone in the store about what's in style," Whitton said. "We'll be glad to put something together for you."

For more information about Plato's Closet, visit [www.plato-scave.com](http://www.plato-scave.com)



MATT WHITE PHOTOS