

'Coats For Kids' brings in 58,000 warm coats in 2009

A tough economic climate did little to deter residents of eastern Massachusetts and southern New Hampshire from coming together and making sure no adult or child would have to be cold this winter. As a result, Anton's Cleaners' "Coats for Kid" community relations campaign collected 58,000 winter coats. This brings the 15-year total to 620,015.

For Anton's Cleaners, which cleans the coats free of charge, and the many area social service agencies that distribute them, this was great news.

"We always felt people would rally in these trying times to help their neighbors," says Charles A. Anton, president of Anton's Cleaners. "We also thank the students from hundreds of schools who took the initiative with their creative campaigns, including several impressive videos, to collect coats, and the dedicated employees at close to 300 companies in our area, for believing in this program."

This year, 284 schools participated in the drive. The schools competed for prizes, including school furnishings and IMAX tickets courtesy of Jordan's Furniture, a visit from a FOX-25 meteorologist, gift certificates for the purchasing of school supplies and pizza and ice cream parties. For the rewards program, schools are ranked on the number of coats collected per student enrolled.

This was the 15th year of Coats for Kids and each year the program has grown. The first year, the program collected roughly 2,700 coats. This year, the 58,000 coats collected represented a donated value of \$883,134 in dry cleaning costs, bringing the total value of cleaning the coats to nearly \$7.4 million.

Supporting partners for this year's drive included Graham Communications and Package Supply Corporation. Promotional Partners also played a big role in the success of the drive this year, including Jordan's Furniture, Fox25 and KISS-108 & JAM'N-94.5. Employees from many local companies, including Fidelity Investments, Jazzercise Fitness Center, Melrose-Wakefield Hospital, Partners Community Healthcare, Bright Horizons, Century Bank, Fair & Yaeger Insurance, MetLife, Shaw's Supermarket, Signature Healthcare, Wellesley Dental Group, ARC Technology Solutions, Edgewater Technology Partners, Lions Clubs, Harvard-Vanguard, Raytheon Technical Services and Clipper City Gymnasium, as well as local churches and synagogues, also helped greatly in adding to the total.

Area social service agencies distributed the coats to those in need at their program offices and other satellite centers. While the number of coats donated was considerable, so too was the number of people in need of coats, according to representatives from the social service agencies that distributed them. The Salvation Army, MASSCAP, Cradles to Crayons, Mass Coalition for the Homeless, Catholic Charities, Middlesex Human Service Agency, SSCAP Dover Outreach, Lowell Wish Project, MHA Lowell, BU Medical Center's Outreach Van, and many local Community Action Programs all served as distribution partners for the coats.

Anton's Cleaners, a family-owned business based in Tewksbury,



MA, with 44 stores in eastern Massachusetts and southern New Hampshire, was recently honored with the Massachusetts Family Business Award. For more information, visit www.antons.com