

Anton's lends a hand

Clothing company continues Coats for Kids

By Micah Flores
MFLORES@CNC.COM

The seasonal chill has set in, and Anton's Cleaners is again calling on all area residents to help children and families by donating winter coats in good condition to the company's 15th annual Coats for Kids coat drive.

Since its 1995 inception, more than 550,000 winter coats have been brought in to the clothing care company's many outlets. The coats are professionally cleaned in the stores and then picked up by distributors. The premise of the drive is simple: anyone in need of a coat will have one.

Last year alone, the company distributed more than 65,000 donated coats, many of which were collected by a number of corporate sponsors and school volunteers.

"It's the right fit," said Arthur Anton Jr., the company's chief operating officer. "We're a clothing business."

Anton's has 44 stores throughout Massachusetts and southern New Hampshire, and since the drive first launched, the company estimates it has contributed around \$6.5 million in coat-cleaning costs.

"It's always been inbred in me, going back to my father, that you need to give back to the community," Anton said. "It's important to give back in life."

Anton, who along with his older brother Charles took over the business from his father and uncle, said the Coats for Kids idea was at first meant to mirror a one-day coat drive that was being organized by a Denver clothing-care company.

"There was a greater need than I ever imagined," Anton said, noting that once the media and sponsors jumped on board, "it took off when more and more distribution partners heard about it."

In Marshfield there are two Anton's Cleaners locations, one at 688 Plain St. and the other at 1899 Ocean St. Both have been accepting coats since Oct. 15 and will continue to do so through Jan. 9.

Barbara McIver, assistant program director at Marshfield's Carolina Hill Shelter, which is a transitional shelter for homeless families, said when the need presents itself, she just drives over to Anton's Cleaners on Plain Street.

"I go in back, they have them lined up all clean, and I take what I need so nobody is without a coat here," she said.

According to Coats for Kids organizers, McIver represents one of more than 465 organizations that help get winter coats in to the hands of those who would

otherwise be ill-equipped for the cold season. McIver noted that all age groups, not just children, benefit from Coats for Kids.

"We have adults and parents," she said, estimating that since the drive started in October, around 30 coats have already been picked up and handed out. "They can be for a gentleman or a lady. It's a great organization, and we're so glad that we're one of the partners."

Other local distribution partners include churches, charities and hospitals, said Amanda Kratzsch, who manages the Anton's Cleaners on Plain Street.

The Plain Street store takes in and cleans coats from the Braintree and Ocean Street stores. Including her store, she said, about 400 coats have so far been cleaned and distributed since Oct. 15.

"It's a wonderful thing," Kratzsch said. "People come in and they're so happy to know that they're dropping off a coat, a piece of clothing that's been sitting in a closet."

Coats, she said, range from a baby's snowsuit to a small children's or adult's coat.

"The response from people in this town is very positive," Kratzsch said.

To donate any good-quality winter coat, visit any of the 44 Anton's Cleaners locations. Visit antons.com to find all store locations.

