



Joseph's Coat Newsletter

FEBRUARY 2009

“Do not neglect hospitality, for through it some have unknowingly entertained angels.”

- Hebrews, Chapter 13

“Joseph’s Coat provides a welcoming environment where the dignity of each person who comes through its doors is acknowledged and affirmed. We strive to truly see and greet the vulnerable and disadvantaged and to foster a sense of community between them and the volunteers and donors who are the life’s blood of Joseph’s Coat.”

- From our website: www.josephscoatmn.org

Dear Friends,

From early November right through Valentine’s Day you have seen to it that we have had everything we needed! In November, you brought mountains of hats, scarves, mittens and gloves, many handmade. You brought hundreds and hundreds of clean, gently used and new jackets and coats for men, women and children. You brought ski pants, vests and hoodies. You delivered new little tops and pants for our children, and new socks and underwear for everyone. You brought sheets and blankets in every size, and hand made quilts by the dozens. We received gift cards for groceries to give to our guests (thanks so much for these) and candy that we put out almost every shopping day for them to enjoy. Some of you brought goodies for our volunteers to munch on so we could “keep our strength up” while we worked. Gifts came in from schools, churches, offices, banks, neighbors, and friends. Some of our shoppers brought treats and cards to the store, and as always, there were plenty of hugs and warm wishes to go around! **For all of this we are truly grateful.**

Every day our amazing volunteers came regularly to give of their precious time and energy. They worked their own shift and then stayed for part of the next one too, just to help! They are talented, smiling, generous, wonderful friends, the heart of this ministry. As if their volunteer hours weren’t “gift” enough, they often came in with a bag of shampoo that they got on sale, a plate of cookies, nut bread or a crock pot full of homemade soup and a basket of bread for us to enjoy.

They are over-the-top wonderful!

THANK YOU!

Special thanks to WCCO Radio, 830, for requesting winter jackets for Joseph’s Coat from their listeners. We received hundreds of new and gently used jackets for those who needed them. We so appreciate their help this winter season. **THANK YOU!**

Cameron Kaiser, an Eagle Scout candidate for St. Thomas More scout troop, did a blanket drive for us. He got **over 100 blankets/throws!** How grateful we are for these cozy blankets! **THANK YOU!**

Each person reading this newsletter is in some way “gift” to Joseph’s Coat. Thank you!

“We make a living by what we get, we make a life by what we give.” ~ Winston Churchill



Eugenia and Joel shop for household items.



Vicky, our hygiene director, her daughter Kelli and Harley take a break from bagging hygiene products.



Barbara, Peter and Linda work on Wednesdays.



Laurie works on Thursdays to help us get ready for the next shopping day.



Troy is grateful for his new clothes and folds them carefully.



George and Kent get the men's department ready to go.



Mary and Bonnie visit for a minute on a busy donation day.

BEING NICE

It was late afternoon on a Tuesday earlier this winter. I was getting ready to go home when the phone rang. Thinking it was my husband, I picked it up, "Joseph's Coat," I said. A male voice, not my husband's, hesitantly said "hello". "May I help you?" I asked. The caller told me that he had a job interview the next day and he was just wondering if we might be able to help him get a few things. I assured him that we would try and asked what he needed. "Well, I don't have a jacket," he said. "What size do you need?" I asked. "Well, I'm kind of a big guy," he said hesitantly. "All right, about what size do you think?" "About a 4X," he answered. I asked if he was pretty certain that a 4X would fit. He thought it would. I asked him to stay on the line while I went to look. I rounded the corner on the small storage room. Yes! The jacket I was thinking of was still there! I told him I did have one and that I would save it for him. I asked, "Could you come to try the jacket on tomorrow morning?" "Yes, I could come," he answered. "What else do you need?" He replied that he had black pants. "Great! Let me go and look for a shirt for you?"

The rack holding the extra large men's things looked pretty full this evening. I asked him again not to hang up. There were two possible options: one white dress shirt and one very nice, almost new, polo. I picked them off the rack. "What else can I help you with?" "Well, I could use some shoes, my tennis shoes are pretty well wrecked." Once again, I asked about size. "Twelve," he responded. I was so grateful to see a very nice size twelve slip-on right in front of me. I scooped it up. "Could you use some socks and underwear? Some new ones have just come in." It seemed like a long time before he quietly answered, "I would like that."

I explained that I would put these things aside for him and that it would be easiest if he could come in about 8:30 in the morning. I asked if he thought he could make it. He assured me he would try to come. I told him that if he needed bus fare to borrow it, and that I would give it back to him in when he got here. I gave him the address and told him I was looking forward to meeting him. We hung up.

The next morning, I arrived a little early so I could get the morning chores done before he arrived. I so hoped he would come. A little after 8:30, the door opened. I went to meet him and introduced myself. I invited him to sit in the chair by the bookcase. His new clothes were right next to him on another chair. I showed him the shirts, asking if he thought they would look nice with his pants. He nodded. "How about you try on the shoes," I asked. He did and nodded his approval. He already had a belt. "How about some hygiene products: soap, shampoo, shaving soap, razor, deodorant?" He nodded. I put his new things in a bag for him. I brought the jacket out; it fit perfectly and looked so nice on him. I took him to the mirror. "You're going to look great and you'll do a fine job today," I assured him.

"Before you go, there's one more thing. It's **the most important** thing you'll be wearing. It will be the clincher for getting the job," I said. He stopped and stood looking down at me. "It's your smile," I said, "be sure to wear your smile." I gave him my best smile as an example.

I turned around to pick up the bag. When I turned back, tears were streaming down his face. "Oh, Sir," I said, "what is it?" He paused, "Why are you being so nice to me?" he asked. "Oh! This is just the way we treat everyone here. It's easy to be nice; you're worth it! Don't worry! You'll do great today! Don't forget to wear your smile!" "Thank you," he said. Still weeping, he opened the door and left the store. I have not seen or heard from him since that day.

"Snowflakes are one of nature's most fragile things, but just look at what they can do when they stick together." ~ Vesta Kelly

AN EXTENUATING CIRCUMSTANCE

TOKENS:

Generally, the guidelines for tokens are: if you walk to Joseph's Coat from downtown (2 miles), I will give you a token to get back because now you are carrying a heavy bag full of the items you selected. I also give tokens if it is pouring rain or really cold and the client asks for one. In every case the client gets **one** token unless there is an extenuating circumstance.

Extenuating: adj. excusable, defensible, mitigating, justifying.

Some of our clients come for reasons other than to shop for clothing, household items and hygiene products. Recently, one of our regular clients came to share good news: he had gotten a job!! I rejoiced with him and he thanked us profusely because he had gotten his interview clothes here and felt his fine appearance had made a positive difference. He went on to tell me that he had one really big problem: he had to get to his new job and he didn't have money for the bus for the first two weeks until he got paid. He wanted to know if we could help him with tokens and then pausing, added that he didn't know for sure if he could pay them back. He is an honorable man!

The week prior to this gentleman's coming, I had stated to a friend that I was almost out of tokens and didn't have time to go to the skyway transit office to buy any. He offered to pick some up for me as he works downtown. I said I would pay him back when he gave me the receipt because bus fare had gone up and I didn't know how much tokens would cost now. Agreed. About a week later he came with the tokens, but wouldn't take any money – "a gift", he said.

Such a dilemma! Our client would not be able to keep his job without my giving him 20 (!) tokens! He had no one else to ask for help... I had the tokens, thanks to my friend. I excused myself and went to sit at my desk and put my head down for a minute. What to do? Slowly, it dawned on me... I thought... whose tokens are these anyway? What would my friend, who gave us the tokens, want me to do? It seemed very clear to me just then that he would want me to empower this good man with a job! I said a momentary prayer that this was the right decision. No thunder bolts sounded! Good! It was settled then. I counted out twenty tokens, put them in a small plastic bag and went out to speak with him. I handed him the bag and asked him not to share my decision with anyone else. Looking down at me, it seemed as if his smile lit up the whole room. "Miss Liz, I'll be back when I can. Thank you! Thank you!" He left the store almost dancing, he was so happy!

Heart-felt thanks to my friend for giving us the tokens. He is just the best!



Margaret, Linda and Marlene take a break from working the table on Wednesday.



Tom, Ojay, Erin, and Jim are all part of the same wonderful family.



Monya, Cindy, Diane and Alice visit between jobs on Wednesday.



Tom, John and George all work in the men's department and help at the door with donations.



Marilee, Jan and Martha look over a child's coat before hanging it on the rack.



Tania, Pedro, Fernando and Denice shop for bed linen.

MANY THANKS...

To the church communities, foundations, businesses and individuals who support us financially. We could never manage without your generous help.

To our faithful donors who continue to gift us with clean seasonal clothing, household items and hygiene products. We are very grateful for your generosity.

To our wonderful volunteers, my dearest friends, extraordinary people. You are the heart of this ministry. Our doors would never open without you.

To my husband Larry, for his constant help, support and encouragement.

For these and for all our blessings, we are truly grateful.



Mandy looks for clothes for Alysia and Sergio.

NEEDS LIST FOR JOSEPH'S COAT

Clean **seasonal** clothing for men, women and children

T-shirts, socks and underwear, new or gently used

Outerwear appropriate for the season

Adult backpacks, sleeping bags, duffle bags

Shoes and boots, especially for our men

Books for adults (novels, mysteries)

Children's games, toys and books

Candles

Hygiene products: soap, toothpaste and brushes, deodorant, lotion, shampoo, conditioner, shaving soap, razors, foot powder, etc.

Household items: pots and pans, glassware, dishes and silverware, small electric items, sheets, blankets, towels, bedspreads, rugs for the bathroom and kitchen, etc.

Brown paper grocery bags

Shampoo is our most pressing need right now. We will be grateful for your donation. Thanks!

**FINANCIAL SUPPORT IS APPRECIATED AND MAY BE DESIGNATED TOWARD PURCHASING ITEMS TO MEET THE NEEDS OF THE PEOPLE WE ARE SERVING.
THANK YOU FOR YOUR DONATION**

SHOPPING HOURS: MONDAY AND WEDNESDAY, 9:00 - 4:30
& 2nd SATURDAY OF EACH MONTH FROM 9:00 - 1:00
(with 2 exceptions this quarter, see below)

DONATION HOURS: TUESDAY AND THURSDAY, 9:00 - 2:00
& 2nd SATURDAY OF EACH MONTH FROM 9:00 - 1:00 **OR BY APPOINTMENT.**
(see exceptions below)

PLEASE CALL AHEAD FOR LARGE DONATIONS.

MAILING ADDRESS:

Joseph's Coat
P.O. Box 2202
St. Paul, MN 55102

CLOSING DATES FOR HOLIDAY TIMES:

April 6th - 11th (not open Saturday the 11th)
May 25th - June 30 • **June** 29th - July 4th
September 7th - 12 (not open Saturday the 12th)

STREET ADDRESS: 1107 West 7th Street - On West 7th Street, 1 block West of Randolph, 1 mile East of 35E

PHONE #: 651-291-2472 **WEB:** josephscoatmn.org

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