



Joseph's Coat Newsletter

OCTOBER 2008

“How lovely to think that no one need wait a moment, we can start now, start slowly changing the world! How lovely that everyone, great and small, can make their contribution toward introducing justice... And you can always, always give something, even if it is only kindness!”

- Anne Frank

Dear Friends,

Speaking of change and kindness, have you noticed how our Creator has been working overtime lately to get our attention and to make us happy? Today, driving home from the store in radiant sunshine, I was struck by the beauty of the foliage along both sides of the freeway and along the riverbank. The bushes and trees were brilliantly colored: reds, oranges, yellows and greens. It was spectacular!

I have been working at Joseph's Coat now for almost eight years and I have come to believe that it too, is pretty spectacular. Over Labor Day, I read a little book entitled Because of Winn – Dixie. It was written for children, but a sentence toward the end made me think of the store: “I looked around the room at all the different faces, and I felt my heart swell up inside me with pure happiness”. On shopping days, when I go outside to welcome our guests, I look up the block and see so many faces, seldom fewer than 100, waiting for us to open. Something happens to me just then and to many of our guests as well...I am struck by the realization of how happy I am to be there, in their company. Smiling, I shake everyone's hand in welcome, many give me a hug, almost every person smiles back at me. There are so many that I tell them of the “specials”, (Halloween costumes, new t-shirts, etc.) in smaller groups of about 20 or so. They listen politely, not wanting to miss anything; Mary translates for those who speak only Spanish, one woman signs for her deaf friend. That completed, they come streaming in, ID cards are produced, names written down and bags are filled. Per the fire marshal, we can have a maximum of 83 people in the store at a time. Last week it took until after 11:30 to get everyone who was waiting, into the store.

While directing traffic on the sidewalk and in/out of the store, I recently heard:

“It's such a blessing to shop here. It helps me so much!” a woman shopper, wheelchair bound.
“Liz, you know that picture I got last week? It looks so beautiful in my room. I just love it!”
“Thank you, everyone”, spoken loudly at the door by a grateful, departing guest.
“I haven't eaten in four days; do you know where I can get some food? A female visitor.
“I'm gonna be a witch on Halloween! What are you gonna be?” From a little person.
“We love you, you know! Greatly!” From a gentleman, as he left the store.

We are currently helping about 500 adults and 85 children each shopping day!

YOU MAKE IT HAPPEN WITH YOUR WONDERFUL
GENEROSITY TO JOSEPH'S COAT!
THANK YOU!

“God's grace does remarkable things.” ~ Father John Estrem



Maxine brings her grandchildren to work at Joseph's Coat in the summer months.



Char and her granddaughter Christine work together at Joseph's Coat.



Our volunteer, Gene and his grand-daughter, Little Mary, visit Joseph's Coat together.



Jaziyah and Mike check out the toy area.



Mahogany and her son Micah shop for the third time.



Linda and her fiancé Richard shop together.

Special thanks to each of you who brought school supplies to Joseph's Coat. You provided a wonderful gift for the families who shop here. Not only do they appreciate receiving the supplies, but they are also grateful that some of the stress in their lives has been relieved and that their children, who have so little, can start the school year on the right foot.

SCHOOL SUPPLIES

One Friday morning early last August, some friends called wanting to know if I was busy that day. They wanted to take me shopping for school supplies and a few other things!! I was delighted to go and met them at a local store where they selected and purchased several carts full of school supplies and other things for Joseph's Coat! It was like Christmas in August!! A few days later, everything was sorted and ready to give away.

There was a message on the answering machine when I arrived at the store on Saturday to get ready for the shoppers, donors and volunteers who would be coming soon. It was from a single mom. She stated that she had a son, age 13. She went on to say that all the money she makes or gets goes to pay the rent, and all the money her son makes or gets goes to pay utilities. She basically has no money for anything extra. Sobbing now, she tells me that she can't figure out a way to get any of the school supplies that are on the "recommended" list the school sent them. She was so worried!! She said that someone told her that "we were nice" and to give us a call.

I called her back but there was no answer; I left a message. I told her that this wasn't something she needed to worry one bit about...that we would provide the school supplies that were on his list as best we could, and that she should come over Monday or Wednesday. I assured her that if she didn't have money for the bus, to borrow it and I would give it back to her when she got here. "Bring your list", I suggested. I wondered just then what I would do when they arrived as we had a memo posted over the table that clearly stated exactly what supplies to include per bag per family.

They came in Monday; she introduced herself and her son. I took the list and went back to the table. I stood there for a moment and tried to imagine what the wonderful donors of all these supplies would want me to do in this case. I hesitated for just a moment and then filled a bag with everything that was on the list with just a few minor exceptions. When I returned and handed the list back to her with almost everything checked off and the bag full to the brim, she began to cry ~ this time, with relief and appreciation. I sent her son over to look for tennis shoes and held her in my arms, reassuring her again, not to worry, just call or come over. She said she would come again in a few weeks for school clothes. I watched for her, but with so many people coming for help with supplies and school clothes, I did not see her again.

YOU MAKE IT HAPPEN, THANK YOU!



Volunteers Margaret and Sue share stories on a busy shopping day.



Francelle chooses a new shirt.



Angelo waits for his friend to finish shopping.



Rivera and Hogia shop together.

Continue to be who and how you are...to astonish a mean world with your acts of kindness. We are touched by your kindness and renewed by your goodness." ~ Maya Angelou



Volunteers John and Marilee Miller both work in the store. What a team!



June lights the candles on John's birthday cake, both wonderful volunteers.



David is a student at a local college and works at Joseph's Coat every Wednesday. He's a great guy!



Rosa, Darwin and Zittaly are at the linen table having gotten some new sheets.

A LITTLE PROBLEM! CAN YOU HELP?

A couple of weeks ago, John, one of our Wednesday volunteers, was having a birthday. To mark this special occasion, his daughter Ellen came from out of town to help him celebrate. On Wednesday morning they came to the store together. It is John's job to work at the door. He helps me get enough, but not too many people into the store without exceeding the guidelines set by the fire marshal. He counts the children. And, he directs traffic, ushering out those who have finished shopping before letting in those who have been waiting outside.

It was a very busy morning; hundreds of clients had left the store, each one with a bag carefully packed. One of our volunteers quietly notified me that there weren't very many bags left in the gathering space where they are stored. About 11:00 o'clock, John and Ellen were ready to leave. I asked John where he did his weekly grocery shopping..."Lund's in Highland", he answered. I said, "how about you and Ellen drive over to Lund's and talk to the store manager and tell her that both of you have been standing here helping our guests for several hours, that we have already helped hundreds of people get the things they need and that we are running out of bags. Ask if they would please donate a ream of bags to Joseph's Coat and see what they say." John hesitated just a little and looked at Ellen who took the challenge, said, "OK! Let's go, Dad", and off they went. Not long after they left, they were back with the ream of bags!! We want to say, **"thank you, John and Ellen, for your willingness to help and thank you Lund's, for your kindness and generosity to us."**



John and his daughter Ellen went to Lund's to request a bundle of paper bags for Joseph's Coat when we were running out. Hurray, you two!

We would really appreciate your help. When you are in the area, or come by to drop off a donation, would you please bring us grocery size bags that you will not be using? We will be very grateful. Note: We are not able to accept bags that are larger or smaller than regular size grocery bags (i.e.: Cub, Rainbow, Lund's, Kowalsky's) that you will not be using? We will be very grateful. **Thank you!**

ONE ADDITIONAL REQUEST: we never have enough things for our men. We really need men's jeans and khaki pants (all sizes), shirts (long and short sleeve), socks, sweatshirts, T-shirts and underwear, winter jackets, hats, scarves and mittens. **THANK YOU!**



Bernie and Tricia sort clothing together on Thursdays. Tricia says, "I come to Joseph's Coat to make myself feel good."



Liz is "Queen for a Day" on her birthday.



Andrea is a student at Twin Cities Academy and a Joseph's Coat volunteer.

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.

FALL AND WINTER 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



A local church gave us bunches of balloons for the children to enjoy. Thank you!



Bob comes every Monday to run the vacuum at the store and also is a member of our Board of Directors.

If you buy Blue Sky books and don't use the bus passes, we can surely use them.

Stop by or mail them to P.O. Box 2202, St. Paul, MN 55102. Many thanks!

Joseph's Coat is in need of volunteers. Please call if you can help. 651-291-2472

**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.

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

PLEASE CALL AHEAD FOR LARGE DONATIONS.

MAILING ADDRESS:

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

CLOSING DATES FOR HOLIDAY TIMES:

Thanksgiving: Mon. Nov. 24th thru Fri. Nov. 28th
Christmas & New Years: Mon. Dec. 22nd thru Fri. Jan. 2nd
Wishing you the happiest of holidays. Peace!

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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