

Adena's Coats For Kids Warms Holidays for Area Children

More than 1,000 coats donated to school districts to distribute to students in need

CHILLICOTHE, OH (Dec. 13, 2021) – The holiday season is often a favorite time of year for those able to wrap themselves in its comfort, warmth and joy.

For those with more limited means, however, the season also brings with it the return of bitter cold temperatures that make the warmth enjoyed by so many very hard to come by.

The Adena Health Foundation, in conjunction with the physicians, advanced practice providers and other caregivers throughout Adena Health System, recognizes the need that exists in our schools and communities and for roughly the last dozen years have sought to do something about it through the Coats for Kids program. Recently, more than 1,000 coats purchased and then donated by Adena caregivers were delivered to school districts across the region that had identified students in need of a winter coat.

"I cannot even explain our need for this kind of stuff in our district," said a guidance counselor at one of the schools where some of the coats were delivered. "Your staff is so appreciated for doing this outreach, I'm sure it's a ton of work but it's so needed. When students need coats, it's a true need, and some of our population does without and we work extra hard just to feed them and get their basic needs covered. Thank you so much."

In the lead-up to the holiday season, the Health Foundation asks for lists from several area schools of coat sizes and quantities needed for those facing the most difficult financial circumstances within their districts. Students supported by the program are identified by teachers, principals, bus drivers and others who may know of a family's financial situation or notice that a child may not have proper clothing to ward off the cold.

The Health Foundation then asks Health System employees interested in participating to purchase at least one new coat for students on the list. The coats are collected, prepared and then delivered to the individual school districts for distribution.

They are welcomed with excitement. Megan Miller, a Caregiver Relationship Analyst with Adena, noted that a staff member at Chillicothe Primary School told her, "Coat day is the best day of the year" while another person assisting in the distribution at the school suggested it may be better than Christmas for some. At Piketon High School, Miller added, a parent had called just that morning asking about the coats, while some staff members in Waverly were surprised at the amount of coats piled in the van.

"All in all, it was a wonderful morning filled with tons of smiles," Miller said, a sentiment shared by several who helped with the deliveries.

Some of the stories of students shared with Adena from past program years clearly show the difference a warm coat can have on a child.

Take, for instance, one little girl who was so excited to receive her coat that she said she would sleep in it, thus allowing her brother to use the blanket that night. Or the response of a 16-year-old girl who cried when receiving her coat, saying nobody had ever bought her anything that nice. Or another instance in which children wore their new coats at recess in unseasonably warm weather because they were so excited to receive them.

Adena's original participation in the coat drive started as a community project for Nurses Week under the oversight of Sharon Wills and involved slightly less than 300 coats. Over the years, the Health Foundation has expanded its outreach to an increasing number of area schools to the point that following this year's coat drive, it is estimated that more than 13,000 children will have received coats from Health System employees since the program's inception.

"It is a project I have done or been a part of for more years than I can remember and one of the most rewarding projects I do," said Robin Berno, Health Foundation Director of Major Giving. "Giving these kids hope and showing them the love of strangers warms my heart.

"I have had our own caregivers tell me they give and buy coats because they or their children were once recipients of a coat or coats and they want to give back. I always say these kids will pay it forward one day and, when I hear stories like that, I know we are doing the right thing."

Coats for Kids marks just one of many contributions made by the Adena Health Foundation in its commitment to improve the quality of life in the communities it serves. In addition to receiving contributions from generous donors in the community, funding to meet those needs is also provided by Adena Health System employees during an annual caregiver fundraising campaign conducted every spring. Funds from that campaign not only help in the community, but also provide additional resources to enhance patient care and meet emergency needs of Health System caregivers.

Adena Health System employees and the Adena Health Foundation are happy to provide their warm embrace to students who will benefit from this year's Coats for Kids campaign, and wish everyone a cozy and joyous holiday season.

For more on how you can help the Adena Health Foundation, email foundation@adena.org or call 740-779-7528.

###

Media Contacts: Jason Gilham; 740-779-7787; 740-466-8265 (cell); jgilham@adena.org
Chris Balusik, 740-779-8504; 740-672-4078 (cell); cbalusik@adena.org