



ocate a league

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Junior League of Austin

Coats for Kids



The winter, and holiday season in particular, is a time when Junior Leagues often take their charitable giving to the next level. During a season when some families need the most help—whether it be fighting the cold weather or providing their family with holiday meals or gifts—The Junior League is there. In keeping with this history, the Junior League of Austin has hosted an annual coat donation program for more than a decade called Coats for Kids.

The program got its start in 1996 when Goodwill Industries approached the Junior League of Austin Board of Directors about taking over their Coats for Kids program, as it was no longer aligned with the organization's mission. After adopting the program, the League maintained partnerships with the original community partners, Jack Brown Cleaners, KVUE, ABC TV and KASE 101 radio.

The annual project, which takes place in late November/early December, collects and distributes over 30,000 warm winter coats to eligible children and teenagers in the Central Texas area. Upon adopting Coats For Kids, the program's scale required that the Junior League of Austin recruit and train approximately 1,000 volunteers from the community for the coat drive and distribution.

"The most rewarding aspect is for volunteers to be able to see the full circle of giving in one day," says Junior League of Austin past President, Beth Smith. "Over the years, we're able to place a warm coat on a child and watch as he or she leaves the building with a smile. We get a hug or handshake from their parent(s) knowing that their child/children will be warm, hopefully healthier and able to maintain their activities and school attendance as a result of being protected against the elements of winter. And now, given how long the project has been in the city, we are enrolling volunteers who once were coat recipients as children!"

To ensure that members of the community who need the service most are helped, recipients must meet certain qualifications to receive coats. Qualifications include that children must be 18 years of age or younger and accompanied by a parent or guardian on distribution day. Parents or guardians without children present on Distribution Day must present proof of children's birth and proof of enrollment in a governmental assistance program or family income at or below the national poverty level (\$13,690 for family of two, \$20,650 for family of four, \$34,570 for family of eight and add \$3,480 for each additional member).

The League's greatest challenge in maintaining Coats for Kids has been addressing the growth and scale of this long-running service: each year the collection goal increases, which increases the number of volunteers needed for both the drive and distribution day and also increases supply and venue budgets. But once such challenges are met, this ongoing seasonal service to its community provides the Junior League of Austin with the best gift of all: the gift of giving.



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