



UNH Warmth Drive A Huge Success: More Than 1,000 Articles Of Clothing Collected

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DURHAM, N.H. -- As the first snow falls in Durham and area residents feel the cold beginnings of the long winter season, University of New Hampshire Community Service and Leadership students are trying to help those unprepared for the weather.

The students, most of them part of the Thompson School's Community Service and Leadership Program, are completing the final stages of their community-wide Warmth Drive. The drive, which began Nov. 15 and ended Dec. 6, was a program designed to collect new and used clothing and distribute the clothing to those in need.

The Community Service and Leadership students, who planned the Warmth Drive, asked students, businesses and area residents to donate articles of clothing that could be used to keep a person warm.

To date the students have collected more than 3,000 articles of clothing, including 764 jackets, 1,250 shirts and sweaters, 723 hats, gloves, and scarves, 160 shoes and boots and 94 blankets. They still have clothing that has not been counted.

The students now face the enormous task of sorting and delivering the clothing to the numerous support organizations located in the New Hampshire seacoast area.

Sophomore Ashley Iber of Barrington estimates that they will have about 3,500 articles of clothing when the sorting is complete. Iber, who collected the clothing from Ocean National Bank in Durham and Newmarket, as well as two donation boxes in Barrington, said that she didn't know what to expect the first time she went out to collect from the donation sites.

"When I went into Ocean National Bank [Durham] for the first time they already had two boxes full and two bags next to that," said Iber. "They're a great example of a business that has gone way beyond the expectations."

Freshman Melissa Podaski of Iveryton, Conn., said that she and other students were surprised at the amount of support they received for the Warmth Drive.

"We didn't think it would be this big," Podaski said. "We have about 10 agencies left to deliver

to. We keep having to go back and forth because there is so much clothing to deliver.”

Associate Professor and Chair of the Community Service and Leadership Program Kate Hanson has been assisting the students in coordinating the program. Hanson said she was surprised by the amount of organizations that have come forward looking for donated clothing.

“What is amazing is the number of organizations in the area that said they have a desperate need for clothes,” Hanson said. “Everything from schools, to group homes, to family services.”

Hanson also recalled some individual families that contacted the Warmth Drive looking for help.

“One woman told us that she’s always been in a position every year to help others but because of a recent divorce she doesn’t have enough money this winter for warm clothes for her three children,” said Hanson.

Many of the organizations that the Warmth Drive is providing clothing to are located in

the Seacoast region. The Community Clothing Shop in Rochester, which supplies free clothing to members of the community, is one of the many local organizations receiving some of the donated clothing.

“The students found our organization on the United Way web site,” said Dan Steinbach, grant coordinator of the SHARE Fund that oversees the shop. “I told them to ‘bring what they can because we have lot of people in need here.’”

Steinbach said that the students delivered about 400 articles of clothing to the shop. He believes that the clothing will help at least 100 people.

The Rochester elementary school, another receiver of donated clothing, will use the clothes for children who don’t have proper cold weather attire.

“When we have students come to school who don’t have hats or mittens they will have them now so they can go outside,” said Cindy Pauline, extended school programs and volunteer coordinator. “We think it’s wonderful. We really appreciate what they’ve [UNH students] done.”

Several businesses in the area have donated not only clothing to the Warmth Drive but also monetary support. Ocean National Banks in Durham and Newmarket have both served as drop-off sites for clothing as well as donated money to the Community Service and Leadership students to clean some of the clothes.