

Coats of Kindness believe that a simple act, such as donating a coat, can change someone's life. Our goal is to collect and provide any person in need with a warm winter item, for free. No questions asked. The need has never been greater. Let us help you or your organization create a successful and life-changing event.

HOW TO ORGANIZE YOUR OWN COATS OF KINDNESS COAT DRIVE

Coats of Kindness have made organizing a local coat drive simple, easy, and fun! With the provided materials below, you can run a successful coat drive with minimum time and effort. Your friends, family and co-workers can come together to provide new and gently used coats and winter wear. This drive will help make a difference in the lives of those less fortunate giving them hope, comfort, and warmth this winter season.

HOW TO RUN A COAT DRIVE

STEP 1: SELECT THE TIME FRAME FOR YOUR DRIVE

There is no wrong time to help those in need, but coat drives traditionally are held in the early fall or winter when the weather turns colder. The holiday season - from Thanksgiving through New Year's Day – is an especially popular time to collect items for people in need. Think “out with the old in with the new” as many folks are busy going through their closets. No matter what the length of time you choose, plan on receiving items after your deadline. Expect the actual deadline to be a few days after the deadline that you publicize.

STEP 2: CHOOSE AN AGENCY WHO WILL RECEIVE YOUR DONATIONS

There are many agencies in your community that can accept and distribute coats. You may already have a local organization that you support – check with them to see if they have a need. Agencies/people to consider are: homeless shelters, missions, crisis centers, halfway homes, foster agencies, women's and children's shelters, or neighborhood resource centers.

Ask the following questions:

- Do you give the coats away for free?
- Can you give them to both children and adults?
- Is there a limit on the number of items you can accept?
- Are you able to pick them up or do we need to schedule a delivery?
- Can we mention your name/organization when we advertise our drive?

Tracking progress publicly such as with a 'fundraising thermometer' or weekly progress report, provides a great incentive for continuous effort.

STEP 3: SELECTING A COMMITTEE

Many hands make light work. Donation drives are fun, but they require a certain amount of planning in order for them to be successful. Gather a committee that wants to be an integral part of your drive and assign everyone specific tasks. Some of the duties you may want to assign are as follows:

**Chairman of the committee to oversee all details and answer all questions*

**Coordinator of advertising*

**Photographer*

**Outside public relations/media contact*

**Chief of storing the donations*

**Coordinator of packing and transportation to the non-profit organization*

STEP 4: SET A GOAL

Determine the amount of donations you want to raise. Your goal should be realistic but also take some work to attain. Goal-trackers keep everyone informed, and show how much more work is needed to reach your goal. When the goals have been clearly defined, people remain motivated and it sets the stage for the final, fulfilling breath of fresh air that lets all your committee members say "we did it!"

STEP 5: ORGANIZING YOUR COAT DRIVE

You can structure your coat drive in any number of ways: For example, you could solicit directly from families and friends, ask local merchants, places of worship, or schools to allow drop-offs, or arrange for a drop-off bin at your work place. You will need to decide if you will accept and how you will use and handle monetary donations. If possible, use tiered relatable numbers, for example a \$25 donation purchases 1 coat, a pair of snow pants and a hat.

If you are using a school, a community center, or other location as an un-manned drop-off, let the administrators or owners know when you will pick up the coats.

A school collection: This can be held school wide, by an individual classroom, by a student run organization such as student council, or by the school's PTA/PTO. Promote through flyers, school posters, weekly announcements, individual classroom presentations, at major events or assemblies and post or blog on the school/district websites.

A community collection: At a community-sponsored event, such as a festival or holiday tree lighting, your group could host a coat drop-off bin or booth. Or have each guest bring an item as their "entrance ticket" to a local event. Promote the event in the local newspaper and on area radio and television stations.

A youth group or place of worship collection: Flyers can be placed in weekly announcements, monthly bulletins or on your website. Donation boxes can be placed around the church for donations.

Student organization collection: Local Boy or Girl Scout Troops could hold a week long drive inviting the public to drop off items in donation boxes at local supermarkets or at Government offices or buildings.

A work place collection: Flyers on community bulletin boards, drop off bins, and workplace intranet can advertise the drive. Make it fun by offering incentives for employees or departments who donate the most items. If you are with a company, many are willing and able to make a matching gift of their employee contributions.

STEP 6: SETUP DROP-OFF LOCATIONS

Depending on what your planning committee decides, you can collect your donations at one or more locations. Use the same branded collection bins at all locations to increase recognition and awareness. Provide drop off bins to participating sites in the morning hours, with pick up scheduled for mid-day. Make sure the bins are easily accessible and well marked. Advertise drop off containers by putting up a "Drop-Off Point" poster on the door, window, or nearby wall of the building. Secure another poster where people can see it, but where it is protected from the weather. Do not be afraid to ask a business or office if they would consider being a drop off location. Decide where you will store the coats after the box fills up.

Many publications need a month or more advance notice to promote your event. Plan accordingly. Consider using the agency's name (with their permission) when promoting your coat drive.

STEP 7: PUBLICIZE YOUR COAT DRIVE

Make some noise! Publicity is the key to a successful drive and you want to reach as wide of an audience as possible. Don't worry that you might get too big of a response: that is rarely a problem with any charity-related event.

Be sure to include the contact name, phone number/email address, dates of the drive, where drop off bins are located, times to drop off your items, drop off requirements (nothing ripped etc.) and who the coats will go to.

- Display eye catching posters/flyers in public areas such as a front desk, break room, place of worship, classroom, or neighborhood community center.
- Announce over the school's PA system and in their weekly newsletters.
- Email a press release to area newspapers, t.v. and radio stations to be featured in their life or community sections.
- Send information via email lists and electronic bulletin boards.
- Create a Facebook page or group.
- Ask people to promote it on Twitter or MySpace.
- Put donations on display to inspire others.
- Give regular updates to share donations received and number left to reach goal.

STEP 8: HOLD YOUR COAT DRIVE!

If your drive is a one day event, leave extra time to get to the coat drive location, and make sure you have cell phone numbers of any volunteers helping with the drive. Consider providing refreshments and snacks for your volunteers. Make sure, in advance, that everyone has clear directions on how to find the coat drive location and that parking and transportation instructions are clear. Bring all needed supplies (pens, tracking sheets etc.)

As donations are received, take time to run through the donations to look for items that cannot be used once delivered to the nonprofit. While you are receiving and sorting, keep an accurate count of the coats collected. Take lots of pictures and/or video of the items donated and the volunteers working.

Let Coats of Kindness know AS SOON AS POSSIBLE about your plans and dates so we can promote your event on our website with enough lead time for people in your community to learn the dates, locations and other pertinent information.

STEP 9: IT'S DELIVERY DAY!

Before your deadline approaches, make sure your agency is ready to receive your coats. Give them a quick call to confirm your delivery plans. Delivering the donated items is a great way to engage others and generate attention for the success of the drive. You can invite donors to assist in the delivery and you can wear school or office t-shirts to promote publicity of donations. Officially end your drive by thanking your donors and posting the number of donations you collected in the common spaces where the drive was located or on the various print and media outlets you used.

STEP 10: TELL COATS OF KINDNESS ABOUT YOUR COAT DRIVE

TELL US WHAT YOU ARE DOING

We are so excited you have chosen to do a Coats of Kindness Coat Drive and want to celebrate how you helped give back to your community. Please reach out to us in the very beginning. We want to help promote your event, provide resources and materials, and answer any questions you may have. **You can reach us at www.coatsofkindness.org or on Facebook at <http://www.facebook.com/pages/Coats-of-Kindness>**

SHARE FEEDBACK

It is our goal to help you run your drive from A to Zipper. We are always looking for feedback on our materials, so please let us know if this guide was helpful or any additional information you wish we would have included.

INSPIRE OTHERS

Remember, whether you have five minutes, five hours, or five days, you can change the life of someone in your community.

[NOW, WHAT ARE YOU WAITING FOR? GO GET SOME COATS...!](#)