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January 1, 2024

Dear Volunteers, Sponsors, Donors, Golfers and Friends:

Clothing Our Kids (COK) is now in its twelfth year, and it's clear that the need for school clothing in our community has continued to be significant. Incredibly in calendar year 2023, COK supplied nearly 4,000 additional items of clothing to the Sussex County school kids in need as compared to 2022. Over COK's lifetime, almost 207,000 articles of clothing have been delivered to approximately 35,000 children. The organization is able to meet that demand for new school clothing thanks to your continued support of our Mission. And our Mission boils down to providing a better life through education for kids who did not ask to be born into less-than-ideal situations. The Los Angeles Superintendent of Schools recently said that education is key to lifting children out of homelessness and poverty. He was one of those kids. And as Founder Mary Rio said: "It's not just about new clothes, it's about a new life."

The year 2023 came with many challenges which continue into 2024. These include supporting all of the Sussex County Middle School kids in need along with the expense of larger size clothing. As early as August COK answered numerous calls from schools, family shelters and emergency family relief services. Hence, the need is greater than ever. In addition, we are now supplying clothing to all seven Head Start and preschool programs thanks to Susan O'Doherty's tenacious efforts. We're greatly indebted to Karen Borges and her Center Managers and Volunteers who accomplished these expansions while keeping up with the increased Elementary School demand. According to the latest financial report, COK has spent over \$30,000 more on clothing in the current school year than during the same period of 2022.

Recently Mike Wezel brought on new financial advisors to help manage COK's accounts. Mike also managed a great team of Volunteers resulting in a successful Golf Outing. Monica Anthenelli and Diane Poletti oversaw more than 10 Clothing Drives since the start of our fiscal year. With the School Liaison Program in its second year, Debbie Polise and Diane Poletti along with the Liaisons reached out to each School Representative ordering clothing on behalf of the kids in need. Flyers were designed by Deb Quinton to be displayed in every teacher lounge, break room, and on school buses so that all personnel are aware of the service COK provides. Thanks to Peter Thomas for finding previously untapped Grant sources resulting in many new opportunities. I am in awe of these folks and all Volunteers that collaborate with them. We cannot serve the kids without our Volunteers who are so generous with their time and talents. Many more are working "behind the scenes" in helping the kids including Web Master Mariam Douglas, Social Media Manager Amynda Cosgrove, Database Guru Ellen Osis, and our Numbers Keeper Janet Henderson.

COK has come a long way in eleven years but none of our work would have been possible without support from each and every one of you. So, for your kindness and for expanding hope and promise to those who have so little, thanks from me personally and from the COK Board of Directors.

Sincerely,

Bob Blouin
It's all about the Kids!

