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CLOTHING OUR KIDS (COK) PRESS RELEASE – APRIL 19 WHY COK DOES WHAT IT DOES AND WHY WE CAN'T ABANDON OUR KIDS AFTER MIDDLE SCHOOL

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A Teacher wrote: “Good evening, I just wanted you to know that the student who you delivered clothes and shoes to today cried when he received the items. He said he has one set of clothes and never had a pair of sneakers. When he saw the clothes and shoes, he broke down. This child has not been coming to school because he only owned a pair of slippers with holes in the soles and one set of decent clothing. He knew his grandfather who is raising him couldn’t afford to dress him. We guessed at the sizes since he has nothing. I cannot thank you enough for what you have done for all the children, but especially this one. He said he will be excited to come to school for the last month of his eighth-grade year. Thank you all again. May I order more clothing since he will be going to High School next year?”

After reading the letter, COK Volunteer Center Director Karen Borges said, “this just puts the whole world into perspective. This is a child who did not ask to be in the circumstances which he’s living. To know that he opened a box, and it brought nothing but smiles is something to focus on. I just wish we could send some hugs in that box, because this young man needs everything that we can give him. This boy is a reason we do what we do, and we must never lose sight of this.”

And from School Liaison Cathy Showell, “It’s hard to imagine an eighth-grade boy not coming to school because he only had one outfit and slippers with holes, but that’s why we exist. COK tries to help kids feel better about themselves by providing them with proper school clothing, and it sounds like this boy was overwhelmed after receiving his new clothes and sneakers. Thanks so much to the Teacher for sharing this. It really touched my heart.”

So, that Teacher has a great point. What happens to these kids when they age out of Middle School? COK’s Mission is to clothe school kids through Middle School. We can’t abandon them after eighth grade. Hence, the Board has started a pilot program for Sussex County High Schools. As is COK’s tradition, Volunteers are working directly with High School Representatives – Social Workers, Homeless Liaisons – to provide a closet for those upperclassmen who need appropriate school clothing. In addition, School Reps will assess a student’s situation and provide specific items depending on what’s required. We’re proceeding slowly in this space adding High Schools as funds and Volunteer workload allows.

As Founder Mary Rio said: “It’s not just about new clothes, it’s about a new life.”

