

COMMUNITY

Coats for a cause: Warm the Children gives away 630 winter jackets to Cayuga County children



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AUBURN | Coats, either hung on racks or folded on shelves, filled the majority of the Hilton Garden Inn's ballroom Wednesday morning for the Warm the Children giveaway.

"We might be the largest retailer of children's coats in Auburn today," said Rob Forcey, the publisher of The Citizen, a partner for the event.

The only difference, of course, is that the coats were free.

The local version of Warm the Children, put on as a partnership between The Citizen, the Auburn Rotary Club and the Cayuga Seneca Community Action Agency, gives away winter coats to children in need each year. Forcey said 630 kids in total were set up to receive jackets this year, a record amount for the event.

The line stretched out of the ballroom and around toward the hotel's lobby on Wednesday afternoon. Giveaways ran for six hours, and will pick back up at 9 a.m. Thursday morning.

The coats were purchased from area retailers such as Walmart, Sears, and JCPenney with funds donated to the group throughout the year.

Forcey said the group buys coats in February and March, when there will be close out sales.

The group has 1,000 coats total, Forcey said, and will continue to give out coats to those in need throughout the winter.

The CSCAA is in charge of screening applicants and finding kids in need of the program. The organization also sent several volunteers and employees to help at the event.

For its part, the Auburn Rotary provided volunteers and will host a pancake breakfast from 8 a.m. to noon on Sunday at the Cayuga Onondaga BOCES where all proceeds go to the Warm the Children foundation to purchase coats.

"Our motto is 'service above self' and this event really aligns with that, especially since it's children we are able to help," said Don Grillo, a past president of the Auburn Rotary.

Arby's, Hilton Garden Inn, Generations Bank, Sears, JC Penney, Steve Mueller Motors, and Walmart also contributed to the event. The Auburn store of the national restaurant chain [held a fundraiser in August](#) and donated gift cards for the event. Along with a coat, children will receive a voucher for five free meals.

Walmart, meanwhile, donated the racks used to hang the coats and had several employees volunteering during the giveaway.

Though the group gave away the most coats this year in the history of the event, but Forcey said he believes the event can reach more people.

"I don't think we're servicing all the kids in need in the county," Forcey said. "The need is out there, and we'd like to be able to ensure everyone is taken care of."

How to donate

Warm the Children is funded primarily through donations. To donate send a check to The Citizen, in care of Warm The Children, 25 Dill St., Auburn, N.Y., 13021.