**ORGANIZING A COAT DRIVE**

**FOR YOUR NHS or NJHS CHAPTER**

*Note: The following article was provided to NHS and NJHS chapters by representatives of “One Warm Coat” – a national organization that promotes coat drives. We are grateful to the organization for this helpful overview and hope that many chapters will utilize this process in coming months.*

Many people don’t have a warm enough coat to stay comfortable throughout winter, and lack the money to buy one. Health experts report that even a **2-degree drop in body temperature** results in reduced heart rate, loss of coordination, and confusion. Adults cannot work effectively and children find it difficult to learn. For most, a warm coat solves the problem. But, for the now nearly 15% of Americans living in poverty, **a warm winter coat is a budget “extra.”**

[One Warm Coat](http://www.onewarmcoat.org), a national organization, helps volunteers organize coat drives to meet their own local needs. Their website has lots of information and ideas and there is a Guidebook you can download that will lead you thru the steps to hosting a successful coat drive.

**GREAT REASONS TO DO THIS PROJECT**

* Help people in need stay warm throughout winter.
* Get more involved with your local charities.
* Help people clear coats they aren’t using from their homes.

**THE BASIC STEPS**

**STEP 1: SELECT THE DATES OF YOUR COAT DRIVE**

There is no bad time to help people in need, but coat drives are traditionally timed for fall or early winter. The holiday season - from Thanksgiving through New Year’s day - is a traditional time to collect items for people in need. January is OK as well: People often find they have too much stuff in their houses after the holidays and could be more inclined to donate a coat. You could try a spring or summer date but bear in mind that the receiving agency may not want to store the coats over summer.

Allow at least two days for the drive so that people who forget their coats can partici­pate the following day. You should leave one drop-off box at the location for about a week following the drive so that people who were out of town can donate.

**STEP 2: PICK THE AGENCY TO RECEIVE THE COATS**

The coats must be given to the agency for free, and must then be distributed to people in need for free. Agencies/people to consider include:

* Homeless shelters
* Halfway homes
* Youth shelters
* Women’s and children’s shelters.

One Warm Coat has a [list of agencies](http://www.onewarmcoat.org) that can accept coats. This is only a partial list; there are thousands of agencies across the country that can accept and distribute coats.

Your community may have an existing coat or clothing drive. If so, consider contacting the sponsoring organization to see if you can help expand their efforts. Collabora­tive events can boost involvement, which benefits all organizations involved.

**STEP 3: PLAN YOUR COAT DRIVE**

You can structure the coat drive in any number of ways: In addition to your school being a drop off site, you might ask local merchants to allow drop-offs or perhaps the coat drive can be part of a larger community activity. If you hold your coat drive at an event open to the public – perhaps a basketball game – you will have an opportunity to collect coats from even more people.

If you make the coat drive a competition between classes, be aware that many of the donated coats might not be wearable. Be sure to stress the importance of clean, usable coats!

You can also collect hats, scarves, gloves and mittens, and warm sweaters or sweatshirts. WARM is the key word.

**STEP 4: PUBLICIZE YOUR COAT DRIVE**

You will want to publicize your coat drive as widely as possible, using Facebook, Twitter, local publications, radio, flyers posted in your community and email lists or electronic bulletin boards. Don’t worry that you might get too big a response: that is rarely a problem with any charity-related event.

**STEP 5: TELL ONE WARM COAT ABOUT YOUR COLLECTION PLANS.**

Complete the [Share Your Plans](http://www.onewarmcoat.org) form as soon as you know your dates. One Warm Coat will send you a banner, box labels stickers and more to help plan and run your coat drive.

Also, if you wish to have the public aware of the coat drive, it can be listed on One Warm Coat’s online *Coat Drive Locator*.

**STEP 6: HOLD YOUR COAT DRIVE!**

Get creative with your collection bins – recycle and decorate cardboard boxes; use large (and clean) plastic garbage cans; have a local business “lend” you large containers such as laundry carts; have pick-up trucks “donated” for the day to collect the coats.

An easy way to transport the collected coats to the receiving agency is to use large garbage bags. Separating the coats into Men’s, Women’s and Children’s coats will be very appreciated by the receiving agency. (*Hint*: **Ten** coats to a bag makes for easy counting at the end of the drive!)

**STEP 7: ARRANGE FOR DELIVERY OF THE COATS TO YOUR AGENCY**

Contact the agency *before* collecting coats to learn any specific requirements they may have, and to arrange a drop off time. See if the agency would be willing to pick the coats up from you.

After your drive, drop off your coats as arranged. Be sure to keep an accurate count of the coats you collected so you can celebrate the success and inform One Warm Coat (and your principal) of the number of coats donated.

**STEP 8: TELL *ONE WARM COAT* ABOUT YOUR COLLECTION EFFORTS. COMPLETE SHARE YOUR SUCCESS FORM**

About one week after your coat drive One Warm Coat will email you asking you to complete

the [Share Your Success](http://www.onewarmcoat.org) form.

When you enter your *Coat Drive Number*, all of your contact information is automatically filled in.

The form gives you a chance to share stories about your coat drive. What worked well? What other resources would you like? How can the process be improved? ‘

A *Certificate of Appreciation* will be prepared for your school. If you have additional businesses or people you would like recognized, just let One Warm Coat know those names and Certificates of Appreciation will be provided.

Good luck with your Coat Drive this year!