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## Businesses, schools lead efforts for 'Coats for Kids Drive'

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LANCASTER - Fairfield County's Job & Family Services is trying to give a coat, a hat and gloves to every person who needs them.

With that goal in mind, the agency and the Lancaster-based Fashion Cleaners began the fifth annual Coats for Kids Drive, said Jenny Ruff, community resource coordinator for Fairfield County Job & Family Services.

"The coat drive is a simple way to make a big difference for another (person)," Ruff said.

Good quality, gently-worn coats may be dropped off at JFS, Fashion and Vanity Cleaners or the *Lancaster Eagle-Gazette*.

Coats with tears, stains or broken zippers should not be donated. The winter clothing will be given to anyone who needs them, Ruff said.

A record-high 1,100 coats were collected in 2007. Ruff attributes the success of past coat drives to area schools, especially Lancaster High School.

The high school students donated more than 125 coats in 2006. Thomas Ewing Junior High School has helped the drive a lot this year.

"I believe that when you educate people about a need or a service, you arm them with information that brings hope to others," Ruff said. "Our community youth are real go-getters and vital community partners."

Fashion Cleaners cleans each donated coat for free. Nancy Lovell felt compelled to get her company involved.

"I feel every business has an obligation to give back to the community that supports them," Lovell said. "I wanted to find a way to help that involved more than just writing a check."

She said increased community awareness about the need for donations is one of the biggest benefits of the drive.

"There are so many people that count on these donations," Lovell said. "Those people wouldn't have another way to stay warm if it wasn't for those donations."

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