



Warm The Children campaign helps low-income families purchase winter clothing

Justin Hicks October 30, 2013



JACKSON, MI – Colt Whiting pointed out T-shirts with his favorite characters on them Wednesday as his mother Zenetta Whiting pushed their shopping cart through the Meijer clothing aisles. “I like Thomas, he’s an engine,” the 3-year-old said. “Oh, and I like Spiderman.” Whiting’s five children, Tia, 16, Ashley, 15, Jared, 14, Blake, 4 and Colt, were just a handful of the more than 100 children who got to pick out new clothing Wednesday, Oct. 30, during the first day of Jackson’s Warm The Children campaign.

“I think it’s fabulous; it really helps out a lot,” Zenetta Whiting said. “We came here last night and they tried stuff on to get the right sizes. The little guys are in school, so we’re getting snow boots, snow pants, gloves and hats so they can go out and not be cold.” Warm The Children is in its 15th year locally. Fully funded by donations, the project has raised nearly \$1 million in the Jackson community, said Sarah Risner, campaign co-chairwoman.

The goal is to provide children of low-income families with clothing to keep them warm this winter. Event co-chairwoman Jessie Murray, said the local project hopes to help at least 600 of the 1,100 children signed up this year. Last year, clothing was **provided to 541** children. “The money is paid in Jackson and stays in Jackson to help Jackson families with children 16 and under,” Murray said. “One-hundred percent goes in and 100 percent comes out, and we couldn’t do it without the community donations from local businesses, groups, churches and individuals.”

Families have to apply and are selected based on income. They are not eligible two consecutive years and, if approved, can spend \$83 per child. Shoppers team up with volunteers to calculate prices and help hunt for sales at the Airport Road Meijer in Blackman Township. "Families are still struggling, wages are still stagnant and people are still losing their jobs or have one, two, three, four jobs and are still below the poverty line," Murray said. "The community can rest assured that (families helped) are in need." When kids come through the checkout line, Murray said you can see how happy they are because some are getting new clothes for the first time after wearing hand-me-downs their entire lives. Jackson's Warm The Children is one of 31 campaigns in the nation, run by a partnership of the Community Action Agency, Jackson Junior Welfare League, the Jackson Citizen Patriot and Meijer.

The partnership will hold the program on various dates throughout the rest of the season, as long as it has enough funds. This year, Meijer donated \$10,000 to the cause and many other donors have chipped in with anything from \$5 to \$1,000.

To donate to the campaign, visit the **Community Action Agency website**.

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