

# Operation Warm- Rotary Club Program

## Frequently Asked Questions

### What is Operation Warm?

Originally started as a community service project of the Longwood Rotary Club in Kennett Square, Pennsylvania, Operation Warm, with a wide variety of donors and community organizations around the country, provides new winter coats to children in need through strategic and community partnerships. Our vision is that every child wearing a new winter coat will be healthy, able to attend school regularly and will develop strong self-esteem. Operation Warm receives funding from some of the country's largest corporations and foundations and has been endorsed/ supported by global organizations like Federal Express, UNICEF and the International Association of Fire Fighters. This past winter, we served our two-millionth child, making us one of the largest donors of new coats in the country.

### How many kids are affected by poverty in the U.S?

15.4 million children in the US live in poverty, or 22% of all children.

*(2014 data- Annie E. Casey Foundation. In 2016, a family of two adults and two children falls in the "poverty" category if their annual income is below \$24,300.)*

Nearly half of these children live in "extreme poverty."

*Households with incomes of 50% of the poverty line or less.*

30% of children live in households where parents don't have year-round, full time employment.

*(2014 data- Annie E. Casey Foundation)*

## PROGRAM CONTACTS AND INFORMATION

### How do I get involved or contact Operation Warm?

**Website:** [www.OperationWarm.org/Rotary](http://www.OperationWarm.org/Rotary)

**Email:** [rotary@operationwarm.org](mailto:rotary@operationwarm.org)

**Contacts:** Rich Lalley, Executive Director. 610-388-2500 ext 109 [rlalley@operationwarm.org](mailto:rlalley@operationwarm.org)  
Brandon Smith, Development Manager, 610-388-2500 ext 101 [bsmith@rotary.org](mailto:bsmith@rotary.org)

### Do you have resources for Rotary Clubs on your website??

Yes, we have a [toolkit](#) of resources, including:

- A ["Slide Share" Presentation](#) about Operation Warm and Rotary, with an overview of how to plan a project. This presentation can be used for a club program.
- ["How To" Information](#) with fundraising, event, and press ideas.
- [Templates](#) for project brochures and fliers, press release and a "Pay it Forward" postcard.
- [Coat Order Form](#)

### **How can my Club do an Operation Warm Community Service Project?**

- Identify a local beneficiary partner organization (school, agency or faith based group serving poor children in or near your community).
- Determine how many children you want to provide coats.
- Create and execute a fundraising plan. You will need a little less than \$20 per coat. Fundraising ideas are available on our website tool kit.
- Work with your partner organization(s) to determine the coat sizes needed. Note, coats are shipped in boxes of six; same size & gender. The minimum order is 5 boxes (30 coats).
- Complete and submit the [Coat Order Form](#) at least two weeks before you need your coats delivered. Order before November 1<sup>st</sup> to assure all sizes are still available...once we run out of stock on a size, it's unlikely we will have more this year. After verifying your order is complete and accurate, we will email you a donation request, which you may pay with a credit card on-line or by sending us a check.
- You will typically receive your coats within one week of our receiving your payment.

### **Is Operation Warm a “Rotary Endorsed” Program?**

Historically, Rotary International has not provided official endorsements to third party programs beyond the End Polio Now initiative. However, Operation Warm has been featured in *Rotarian* magazine, over 200 Rotary Clubs in more than 50 districts have partnered with us, and many clubs have received *District Grants* from The Rotary Foundation in support of their projects with us. And Operation Warm started as a Rotary Club project, which morphed into a district project, and is now one the largest non-profits of its kind in the U.S. So, the Rotary community has certainly supported our work.

## **ABOUT OUR COATS**

### **Why are we giving out new winter coats, not toys or a hand-me-down coat?**

As increasing numbers of families fall into poverty, parents repeatedly tell us how much a warm coat is valued over a toy, as it is a basic necessity. We believe that there nothing like receiving something “new”, especially for a child that may never have had a new winter coat. Schools report that receiving a ***new*** winter coat sends an important message to the child that they have received something of “value” and that they are “worthy and are valued”.

### **Where are the coats made?**

Operation Warm works with manufacturers both overseas and within the United States. Our manufacturing partners create coats made specifically for us and for children in mind. The coats feature a fleece lining, many colorful designs, detachable hoods and tags inside stating “Made Just for You” and with space for the child’s name, address and phone number.

**In what sizes and colors are the coats available?**

The coats are sized for elementary school aged children who are between kindergarten and the sixth grade. The coats run from 2T-14/16, with Adult S - XXL sizes available for larger children. We have a wide assortment of colors for both boys and girls, with each box containing six different color combinations (note, you can not specify colors you will receive). We work very hard to avoid gang colors, and have 72 color combinations in our line so you will not be giving out a “uniform” coat. An exhibit showing this year’s coat colors & style is in our toolkit.

**How do you recommend the coats be given to children?**

First, you need to work with your beneficiary organizations. Obviously, having Rotarians personally provide coats to children is a very rewarding experience. But in some instances, schools or agencies will want to protect the children’s privacy. Other times, coats are given as part of a holiday gifting program, so children open their presents with their families.

Regardless of how you distribute the coats, we encourage clubs and their partners to brainstorm on how giving the gift of a coat can be leveraged for more good, going beyond warmth. Ideas include:

- Give the coats as a reward for a project or group accomplishment;
- Distribute the coats to parents at a family event or parent teacher conference to increase parental engagement;
- Distribute “Pay it Forward” post cards with the coats (see example in our toolkit).

**MEDIA OUTREACH:****How do I go about advertising my event in a way that will ensure media and community participation?**

- A template press release is in our website toolkit. Edit this for your club and project, and upload it to your local news websites.
- Promote on social media. Some clubs even create a dedicated Facebook Page.
- Look to partner with a local media outlet and/or other local businesses who are active advertisers.
- Create a flier or brochure about your project. You can find a template for a one-page flier in our toolkit, and an example of a more comprehensive tri-fold brochure.

**Can Operation Warm provide assistance with our project?**

Yes. Contact Brandon Smith or Rich Lalley with any questions or for assistance with your project.