

Need for winter clothes outstripping supply

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United Way Koats for Kids accepting donations of cold-weather gear

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Despite Winnipeg's mild fall, the bitter cold is coming — and already the demand for winter clothing donations is outstripping supply, United Way Winnipeg says.

As of Friday, there were 533 requests for winter gear that cannot be filled, the local charity said.

“We’re never short on people seeking items, and once the weather gets colder we’ll see another big jump of orders come in,” said Hillary Gair, senior manager of engagement initiatives at United Way Winnipeg.



MIKAELA MACKENZIE / FREE PRESS

Demand for warm clothes will spike when it snows, says Hillary Gair, senior manager of engagement initiatives at United Way Winnipeg.

Need really shows when the first snowfall hits, Gair said.

“It’s like we just get slammed,” she said.

United Way’s Koats for Kids initiative accepts donations and distributes winter items from September to January. There is an increase in requests every year, Gair said.

Last year, 6,000 items were given out.

Donations can include boots, jackets, tuques, mittens, scarves, ski pants and any other cold-weather gear.

“Even if someone just has one coat and they’re not sure if they want to drop it off, that one coat could mean that one kid going to school can be comfortable and warm,” Gair said.

Koats for Kids relies on volunteers to sort through donations, do laundry and mend items where necessary.

Recently retired teacher Heather Quinn volunteers at least once a week.

“Just because you can’t afford a coat, doesn’t mean you deserve a horrible coat,” said Quinn, who has volunteered for seven years.

“You see the fruits of what you’re doing.”

While volunteering at Healthy Start Winnipeg, a non-profit that supports pregnant mothers and parents of newborns, Quinn helped a mother and her baby in need.

“Because I’m connected (at Koats for Kids) as well, we got the mother a coat and a snowsuit for the baby,” said Quinn.

“It makes you very verklempt.”

Koats for Kids accepts donations of used winter gear and clothing at various locations around the city including Winnipeg Fire Paramedic Service stations, YMCA-YWCA of Winnipeg, Access Storage or Toys “R” Us.