



Joseph's Coat

SPRING 2021

BY
APPOINTMENT
ONLY

Shopping Hours:

Monday and
Wednesday
9:00 - 3:00

Donation Hours:

Tuesday and
Thursday
9:00 - 2:30

FINANCIAL
SUPPORT IS FULLY
TAX DEDUCTIBLE.

WE DO NOT
PUBLISH, SELL,
TRADE OR RENT
DONOR
INFORMATION.

The New Normal at Joseph's Coat

Hello! I figured it was time to introduce myself. My name is Tracey Tischler, and I am the Volunteer Coordinator at Joseph's Coat. I started a little over a year ago and then we all know what happened . . . COVID hit us and we had to close temporarily.

It is interesting to see how different the operations at Joseph's Coat are now compared with pre-COVID procedures. As always, some changes have been effortless and others have been tougher. The most upsetting part of adjusting to the world according to COVID was the loss of many of our great volunteers! Most of our volunteers are part of the high-risk population and could not return when we reopened in September.

Before the changes and limitations, Joseph's Coat served about 300 customers each shopping day. The six-foot distancing requirement of StaySafe MN order, made it clear that welcoming that many people per day was not going to work. We had to

figure out a way to serve as many shoppers as possible while adhering to the Gover-



nor's restrictions -- mainly limiting the number of people who could be in our small store at one time and eliminating the long lines of people waiting to come in to shop. We also had to figure out how we were going to handle donations in the COVID environment. Donations had to be separated between hard and soft sided items and isolated for different periods of time before volunteers could sort them. It was evident that Joseph's

Coat did not have enough space to process and isolate the amount of donations we were able to accept before COVID.

We decided that we could adapt to the COVID situation if we operated by appointment only. When we reopened, we were overwhelmed with phone calls from shoppers and donors. We soon realized that our phone system could not handle the calls. The Excel spreadsheets we used to schedule appointments were not efficient. Our eight-year-old computers and software no longer met our needs. Yet, because of the uncertainty brought on by the pandemic, we continued with our makeshift process before investing in better equipment.

Despite obstacles, we made it work. Our volunteers are a dedicated, hard-working

"Shopping is so much better now. I don't feel pressure to find what I want before someone else comes and grabs it."

- Terry

Cont'd on back

A Few Notes...

- ◆ We cannot accept: TV sets, hangers (plastic or wire), sharp knives, adult diapers (such as Depends), medical equipment, inoperable small appliances, telephones or electronics and used cosmetics
- ◆ We need women's feminine products (tampons and sanitary pads), toothbrushes, travel size shampoo, conditioner, body wash and toothpaste, full size shampoo, lotion, conditioner and body wash.
- ◆ Please be sure to check our website for important information about unexpected closed dates/times due to weather or overwhelming amount of donations.
- ◆ We are now accepting Spring and Summer clothing.
- ◆ PLEASE DO NOT PUT DONATIONS IN CARDBOARD. OUR RECYCLING PROCESS HAS CHANGED AND IS NOW LIMITED.

New Normal (cont'd.)

group and our skeleton crew set to work with masks, thermometers, plexiglass screens, and sanitizer.

Fewer shoppers are now in the store at one time. Shoppers have said they like it better that way. They get more attention from volunteers while they shop, and the atmosphere is far more relaxed.

Feedback from donors is also positive—despite the difficulty getting through on the phone and the volume limit of donations. There is no longer a line of cars waiting to donate, and they know that someone will be there to receive their donations.

To be truthful, adapting to big changes in a short amount of

"I like shopping at Joseph's Coat so much more now. We don't have to wait in a long line where people are fighting to get in first. We know when our appointment is and we just need to get there five or ten minutes before."

- Mary

time was frustrating for all. I want to thank everyone for being so patient with us until we could upgrade the technology we were using. Your financial donations made the solutions attainable. We purchased a new phone system and three new computers to make it possible for more than one person to answer calls and schedule appointments on a shared calendar.

None of this could have been accomplished without EVERYONE being supportive and coming together. It DOES take a village. Thank you for making it possible for Joseph's Coat to re-open and continue doing the important work we do. If any parts of the puzzle were missing – shoppers, donors, volunteers, or employees – we would not be complete. Everyone has played an important role in getting us back up and running and, I have to say, in an even more organized and efficient manner. Joseph's Coat has been serving those in need for 31 years. With your help, we are still in operation ready to complete our 32nd year.

Helping in Life and Death

Our standard process requires an appointment to shop, but there are times when employees follow their heart and forego this process. Mark, an employee, was called to the door to help someone who wanted to shop on a donation day. The visitor introduced himself as Mike. Mark said, "I have a brother named Mike." Mark introduced himself and

Mike said, "My brother's name is Mark!" Mike laughed at the similarities they shared, but Mark saw heartache and deep sadness in Mike's eyes. Mike told Mark that he had to have a nice suit. Mark welcomed Mike in and helped him find a very nice grey suit, a shirt, and a tie. Mike teared up as he thanked Mark and said that his wife, the love of his life, had recently passed. He missed her

more than words could say. "I need a suit, Mike continued, because I have cancer and am dying. Thanks to you I have a suit to be cremated in so I look real good for my wife when I see her again." Mark was touched by Mike's story and told him, "Helping people like you is the reason I work at Joseph's Coat. You make it worthwhile."

Please consider making a tax deductible financial contribution to help sustain our work.

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