

Warm Clothing Drive Once Again Collecting Hugs and Connecting Hearts for Delaware's Children

The Governor's Advisory Council for Exceptional Citizens (GACEC) and its community partners, are pleased to report that the Heart 2 Heart Hugs campaign has now begun. Heart 2 Heart Hugs is focused on providing warmth, comfort, hugs and smiles for kids and young adults in Delaware who are homeless or in foster care. Donations of "hugs" (to include new or handmade coats, blankets, scarves, gloves, fleece items, monetary donations and more) will continue until February 2019 for this year's effort.

The GACEC has received tremendous support not only from individuals within the community, but from area businesses, state agencies and other organizations as well. Most recently the Twisted Stitchers crocheting group that meets at Dover's Modern Maturity Center donated many large bags of beautiful handmade items. In October the program was blessed with another large donation of handmade items from the Care Wear project that is part of Volunteer Delaware.

Statistics from the Delaware Department of Education (DOE) show that in the 2017-18 school year, there were 21,168 students receiving special education services. Roughly one third of those students are homeless or in foster care. Homelessness impacts children and the State of Delaware in many ways. Health issues, food security and educational proficiency are areas that the report uses to show how great the needs are for children who are homeless. Wendy Strauss, executive director of the GACEC stated that "...this project connects hearts and collects hugs for our children in foster

care and for our children who are homeless.

Programs like this let our children know that we are thinking about them and we care for them.” Dover Mayor, Robin R. Christiansen commented during his remarks at the Kickoff Event, held November 29th at Central Middle School, “Every one of us can make a difference in the lives of someone who is not as fortunate as we are, and we should strive to do that daily.” Secretary Josette Manning of the Division of Services for Children Youth and their Families (DSCYF) spoke about the blessing that this program is to those experiencing placement in foster care or homelessness. “Often the transition to foster care is a move that is quick and traumatic for the children, having something of their very own at a new place can be such a comfort.” Wendy Strauss concluded the kickoff by reminding everyone to connect hearts and collect hugs for our children who are homeless or in foster care across the State. Items will be collected through February 11, 2019, with the distribution event scheduled to take place on February 14, 2019 at George Massey Station in Dover. The distribution reception will allow foster care representatives and school homeless liaisons from around the State the opportunity to select needed items for their clients.

Drop-off points are located throughout the state and may be found on the homepage of the GACEC at <http://gacec.delaware.gov>. Contact the GACEC at (302) 739-4553 or Sybil Baker, GACEC Administrative Coordinator Sybil.brown@gacec.k12.de.us for additional information.



Dover Mayor Robin Christiansen helps kick off the Heart 2 Heart Hugs warm clothing drive once again.

