

Luke's Closet 2021 Annual Report

Mission Statement: To serve and support foster, kinship and adoptive families residing in Dane county by providing free, high-quality clothing. Clothing is made available quickly and is easily accessible.

Luke's Closet provides free clothes to children from birth to 18 who are in foster or kinship care living arrangements within Dane County. As of the end of 2021, Luke's Closet has been in service to our community for 3.5 years.

Children Served

Thankfully, for most of 2021, Luke's Closet was fully back to operating as we did before the pandemic. In addition to receiving online clothing requests, we were again able to make clothing available through personal shopping appointments and Shop & Eat events.

Luke's Closet was able to operate with a full contingent of volunteers who fulfilled online requests, attended to personal shopping appointments and assisted shoppers at two Shop & Eat events. For the 2021 calendar year, Luke's Closet provided clothes to 220* children. An increase of 27% from the number of children served in 2020. In total, clothing has been provided to over 900* children to date.

Volunteers

Luke's Closet is blessed with many volunteers who generously and graciously serve this ministry. In addition to the steering committee of eight volunteers, a dedicated team sorts clothing donations and two volunteers keep the closet stocked and organized. Our fulfillment volunteers (those who sign up for a week at a time to pack and deliver bags of clothes or meet families for personal shopping appointments) and shopping day volunteers have returned at full strength and new volunteers have been added. We always welcome new volunteers – visit www.stlukes-elca.org/lukes-closet for details!

This year the women of Martha's Circle again provided dozens of handmade pillowcases and handmade fleece blankets which the children adore.

Media Highlights

Luke's Closet has been on Facebook since our creation in July of 2018. In 2021, we added a Luke's Closet Instagram page. Information about services offered can also be accessed through St. Luke's Lutheran Church's website.

Funding & Clothing Donors

St. Luke's Church has generously supported LC since its inception with funds and use of facilities. In 2021, St. Luke's donated the use of a third room which is used as a dedicated donation storage and sorting room. Luke's Closet is also generously supported by direct financial donations from many St. Luke's members.

Members of the LC steering committee are continually reaching out to community sources through grant requests. In 2021, LC received numerous grants including ones from Thrivent, Our Monthly Resolution, Breakfast Rotary, Lion's Club, Middleton Endowment and Madison Investment Advisors totaling over \$11,000. Included in this total is an anonymous \$5,000 donation. Using this donation, along with funds from grants, allowed us to send Kohl's gift cards to 170 kinship children (identified by Dane County Human Services) to purchase new shoes, a much-needed basic need.

All funds are used to fill the gaps in donated clothing inventory. For example, we had an eleven-year-old girl who wears an adult medium in need of a winter coat. We didn't have this size in inventory but a volunteer was able to purchase a coat for this child. Similarly, we had many requests for snow pants this winter and with donated funds we were able to buy these items from Amazon and have them shipped directly to families.

In addition to the St. Luke's community, we are blessed to have the support of former foster children and people beyond St. Luke's who understand that providing clothing is more than simply giving clothes. In December 2021, Luke's Closet received a donation of over 300 pairs of new pajamas from a woman who annually collects pjs from family, friends and co-workers and delivers them to a non-profit.

Appropriate clothing can help a child fit in, keep them warm so they can play outside, can ease the financial burden of the family and allow the parents to focus on loving, rather than the stress of providing. Because of our strong base of donors, children receive 5-7 outfits per request. Having a week's worth of clothing is especially helpful for families who do not have laundry at their home.

We remain thankful to St. Luke's, the donors and volunteers who continue to support this ministry.

*This number includes multiple requests from children.

Select 2021 Luke's Closet Testimonials:

From a Shop & Eat Attendee:

A "small" note filled with "great" thanks for helping us eat, not once but twice, this past month when we were blessed with the foster placement of 2 little girls. Each time your volunteers provided us with beautiful quality clothes that trust of help all in a time of new and unexpected. We are forever most appreciative and appreciative of your gift.

From a Shoe Gift Card Recipient:

Thank you for the new shoe gift cards! We appreciate all the help. The girls are so happy, we are about to go buy new shoes right now!

From a Social Worker:

"I had one caregiver move out of the county just recently...The grandma specifically mentioned Luke's Closet in her email goodbye to me 'Thank you for all the things that you have helped me with, and for all the clothes we got from St. Luke's for the kids was priceless!'"