

# Grapevine church gives away more than 1,000 coats, clothes and blankets

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As a single mother struggling to make ends meet, Olga Martinez of Grapevine is grateful for any help she can get.

So Sunday she spent part of the afternoon sifting through racks of coats and piles of jeans and blankets to find useful items for herself and her three children at the Grapevine Church of Christ's Great Coat Giveaway.

"This is really a big help for me," Martinez said. "Coats are expensive, and the kids grow out of them every year."

Sunday was the third consecutive year that the north Grapevine church sponsored the event as part of its community outreach mission. This was the largest, with 1,400 coats available to be given away.

When it ended, 1,300 coats went to 500 families and individuals.

"We had a great turnout," said Bill Huston, an event organizer. "We are very pleased."

The church gave away about 250 coats the first year and 600 last year. Donations are growing along with need, Huston said.

Sunday was the second year Martinez attended the Great Coat Giveaway. She said she was happy that this is a community service project that the church is continuing.

Church members circulated fliers in local apartment complexes, trailer parks and through some Grapevine-Colleyville district schools and local preschools. Anyone who showed up was invited to select one coat, a pair of jeans and a blanket per family member.

Limited pairs of gloves and mittens were also available.

Most of the items were used, but Burlington Coat Factory at Grapevine Mills Mall donated some merchandise, Huston said.

"The word is out in the community that we do this because I have arrived at the church many mornings to find a bag of coats by the door," church minister Lyle Asbill said.

The coat giveaway is the church's largest community outreach program but not its only project. The church also offers English language classes and a preschool program that provides scholarship assistance to low-income families.

"We don't want to be known as the church that gives away coats but as the church that cares for people," Asbill said.

Besides the clothing, the giveaway event also included a barbecue dinner and drawings for Walmart gift cards.

James and Shari Kirkpatrick of Euless used to have good paying jobs and were able to support their family without assistance. But an auto accident several years ago left them disabled and unable to work. The couple has six-year-old twins.

"We're getting by on disability," Kirkpatrick said. "Things like this are a really big help for us."