

Knights of Columbus warm Baltimore students with 1,000 coats

For the third year in a row, Archbishop William E. Lori joined the Maryland Knights of Columbus Dec. 5 to distribute coats to children in Baltimore.

This year's event was at St. Peter Claver Church in West Baltimore, where every student from Archbishop Borders School, Cardinal Shehan School, Holy Angels Catholic School and Ss. James and John Catholic School – 1,048 all told – went home with a new coat.

Student representatives from each of the Partners in Excellence schools visited with Archbishop Lori to find a perfect fit, and returned with coats for each of their classmates.

"It may not feel like we need it today, but we'll be needing it in the days ahead," Archbishop Lori, chaplain of the Knights of Columbus, said. "Who of us doesn't need a warm coat in the winter?"

In 2016, Coats for Kids, a Knights of Columbus program, allowed local councils to donate 87,906 coats throughout the United States and Canada. The Maryland Knights of Columbus contributed to that number by distributing 1,700 coats last year, during a similar event at Ss. James and John.

Stephen Cohen, state deputy of the Maryland State Council of the Knights of Columbus and parishioner of St. Pius X in Rodgers Forge, has been a knight for 42 years.

"(We are here) to give kids coats that may never get a new coat," Cohen said, adding that the event encompasses several of the Knights' service points of emphasis: church, community, council, culture of life, family and youth.

"We all care about the kids in the community," said Lawrence LaPrade, a Baltimore City police officer in the community relations unit in the Western District, where he

was born and raised. He and another officer helped load the schools' vehicles with boxes of coats.

The Maryland Knights, comprised of men from the Archdiocese of Baltimore, the Archdiocese of Washington and the Diocese of Wilmington, donate between 2,500 and 3,000 winter coats to children throughout the state of Maryland each year.

In addition to the state council, approximately 150 local councils and chapters used fundraisers and direct donations to purchase the coats for about \$18 apiece through a retailer that works with the Knights.

"This is just scratching the surface," said Mark Mangus, state youth activities director and parishioner of St. Louis in Clarksville, who has been a knight for 33 years. "But if we can help some, it's better than not helping any."

Mangus coordinated the purchase and deliveries of the coats to St. Peter Claver. Members of the state council and some of their wives helped to unload and sort the coats by sizes to be sent to the schools.

"No kid should be cold," Mangus said.

Email Emily Rosenthal at erosenthal@CatholicReview.org