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Cold Weather Clothing Program helps county homeless endure winter cold

Submitted by Steve Spraitzar



A man without shelter shows the warm coat that he received from White Pony Express' "Cold Weather Clothing Program." Photo courtesy White Pony Express

White Pony Express has just launched its third Cold Weather Clothing Program for the upcoming winter. The program's focus is to help the homeless in Contra Costa County endure the cold and often wet winter.

WPE's ambitious program, being handled by its "Free General Store," is to distribute at least 10,000 articles to the homeless for the 2017-18 winter, such as warm coats, pants, shirts, socks, hats, gloves, scarves, underwear and boots.

White Pony Express' CWCP originated in January 2016 when two men without shelter died in Walnut Creek from exposure to very low temperatures. It was that sad situation that spurred WPE's founder and Principal Advisor, Carol Weyland Conner, Ph.D., spiritual director of Sufism Reoriented, to ask that warm clothing be procured and provided to the homeless to enable them to endure the freezing cold. FGS was able to provide hundreds of items to many homeless persons who were most at risk.

Earlier that winter, "Roy," a man without shelter, had told a WPE volunteer that he was looking for some thermal pants, as he knew that a very cold weather was coming and that he was sleeping out in the open. WPE happened to have a large thermal jumpsuit that had just been donated to the Free General Store, which the volunteer gave him.

A year later, as the same volunteer was giving a new pair of jeans to a man who had been wearing the same pants every day for three months, Roy came on the scene and exclaimed, "White Pony Express saved my life last winter. You gave me that thermal jumpsuit!"

WPE is primarily asking for monetary donations to help with purchases of clothing for WPE's Cold Weather Clothing Project. These can be sent to White Pony Express, 1966 Tice Valley Blvd., #101, Walnut Creek, CA 94595. Donations of coats, etc., are also being accepted, but they need to be new or like-new donations of cold weather clothing.

This excludes stained, torn, or clothing that shows wear. Garments should be in a condition that might be given to a close family member. Donations of new or like-new clothing can be delivered to Suite 101, 3380 Vincent Road, Pleasant Hill, during hours of operation listed online at www.whiteponyexpress.org/donateclothes.

Volunteers are also needed for WPE's Food Rescue program, which picks up 5,000 pounds of surplus fresh food (fruits, vegetables, meat, dairy/deli/dry goods, bread/pastries and eggs) every day and delivers it to nonprofits that feed the hungry in our county - all free of charge. In just over four years, WPE has rescued more than 5.2 million pounds of quality, nutritious food that have would otherwise gone to waste.

Those wishing to volunteer for WPE should contact Mandy Nakaya at (925) 818-6361 or at Mandy@whiteponyexpress.org.

For more information about WPE, visit www.whiteponyexpress.org.

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