

We met this morning to drive downtown and deliver the coat drive donations to Rusk Elementary. Kim Thoss and I were accompanied by Lori Elwood and Amanda Dearborn, who graciously took their morning to help load all those heavy bags into one SUV and a pickup truck and make the trip with us. As I am sure you saw, we had a tremendous response to our request for donations—literally hundreds of coats, jackets, sweaters and uniform shirts and khakis poured in to the bin in the cafeteria! About 1/3 of the donated items were new with tags attached. We had two “sorting sessions” last week and were delighted to have several parent volunteers come by to help sort and bag the items. We bagged the items according to size, gender and type (coats, pullovers, uniforms, knits, etc.); we ended filling approximately 30 giant black trash bags.

At Rusk, we were greeted by Ms. Joy Love, school counselor, and Mr. Stephen Gutierrez, principal, who assisted us in unloading the bags and getting them into the school building. We were also able to visit briefly with school librarian (and WUES parent) Elizabeth Donnelly, who showed us the newly-renovated library space, which was reclaimed from a storage area this past summer. Both the library and the school building/grounds were impeccable; it is clear that this campus is well cared-for, and that the students and faculty take pride in themselves and their achievements. The students we met (several were called out of class to assist us in unloading, and the principal knew each one by name) were polite and respectful, and clearly curious about what might be inside all those big black bags! I hope cooler weather comes soon, so they can start distributing all those warm clothes. J

Mr. Gutierrez commented that he would love to see our two schools work together on a service project sometime. It was important to him that the students at Rusk see that they can contribute and not just be recipients of others’ service/charity.

Kim and I are grateful to have had this opportunity to work with our school families and to help our students see the results of collective efforts to do something positive for others. Thank you for your enthusiasm and support in promoting this project on the marquee and on the morning announcements. Tracey has been wonderfully supportive, both in encouraging our efforts and in generously making donations herself. We are so grateful to have administrators who see value in taking time for projects like this one.

We look forward to continued partnership with Rusk, and we can’t wait to launch our next service project!

Thanks

Dale Waller & Kim Thoss