

No child asks to be born, and unfortunately, many are born into inadequate situations. Assistance League of Wichita (ALW) has long recognized the affect this has on a community and that keeping children in school has long-reaching, positive results. Through its Operation School Bell program, ALW has been clothing USD259 students since 1985. As of this year, ALW has helped clothe over 75,000 students in need. The need continues to grow as the poverty level of our public schools continues to grow. The students we aid are identified by the school social worker, teachers, and nurses. Their requests determine what we provide. Currently, we can give a child two pairs of pants (jeans or uniform), two shirts, a sweatshirt, six pairs of socks, six pairs of underwear, a coat, hat, gloves, and a shoe voucher. This year we provided the following: pants=5178; shirts=4998; sweatshirts=2763; underwear=11,808; socks=12,660; coats=1792, and shoes=2383.

We fund this project through grants, gifts, and donations. We purchase new clothing at the best prices from wholesale vendors. These items are not purchased to sell. They are all given freely to our community members who need them the most--the children in our public schools. An inadequately-dressed child will often suffer a lack of self-esteem resulting in his/her dropping out of school; a child who attends school every other day because he/she has to share clothing with a sibling loses out; a child who doesn't attend school on days of inclement weather because he/she has no coat or shoes which adequately cover his/her feet--these children will eventually put an even greater economic drain on our communities. ALW is committed to addressing this need with what funds we have at our disposal. Unfortunately, these funds are limited.

Kay E. Dunlap, chairman OSB