

# COMMUNITY CLOTHESCLOSET



## The Clothes Line

Summer 2022

### IT IS (PAST) TIME FOR A NEW ROOF

After 26 years, the original roof on our building is failing – we have leaks and water damage that needs to be addressed. The roof also covers St. Joseph's Food Program, our neighbor, so we are tackling the project together. The cost will exceed \$250,000 and the teams are contacting local philanthropic businesses and individuals for support. Today, we are about half-way to our goal. If you know someone that might be interested in helping to offset this cost, we would love to hear from you.

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Dear Friends,

As summer winds down, we are taking stock of a busy, busy season. Activity is high and client visits are way up when compared to last year. During one Monday in June, 465 clients received over 3,000 articles of clothing and bedding – all in a single day! This kind of help is only possible because of your generosity.

The increase in need is due to many factors – the discontinuation of federal pandemic-related subsidies, the increased price of basic needs such as housing, food and health care and the skyrocketing cost of transportation, among others. We are all feeling the pinch but, unfortunately, the challenge of inflation is largely borne by those at the bottom of the economic ladder - families who are working, but struggling to make ends meet.

Clothing may seem incidental to those who have adequate and functional attire but to those who do not, the right apparel can have profound effects. In this newsletter, we highlight client stories that illustrate how your gift directly impacts the lives of people in our community. Thank you for all you do to support Community Clothes Closet and for sharing our vision of free clothing for all people in need.

With Thanks,

Lisa Jones - Executive Director



# GRATEFUL BEYOND MEASURE

Every once in a while, most of us need a wake-up call, a 're-grounding' that makes us realize just how fortunate we are. For many of us at Community Clothes Closet, that happened in late June when a group of new residents came to shop. The Abedi family had been in Wisconsin for less than a week after spending over ten years in a Ugandan refugee camp. They had left their home in the Congo due to war and insecurity.

It is difficult to capture their joy, enthusiasm and gratitude. "I feel like I finally am home. Please keep doing everything that you do – so many more people are suffering," said Willy, age 22. "I came here with one set of clothes and I like to think about what I have now. I want to go to school, become an electrical engineer. I would like to get more education."

The family is living in a home in Appleton, with upper and lower units and includes mother Amisi, two adult sons, two adult daughters and five other siblings, ages 6 to 16. Once they arrived in Wisconsin, World Relief Fox Valley was the resettlement agency that facilitated their transition to a new life here. Through World Relief's Good Neighbor Team program, they were also partnered with a group from St. Paul's Lutheran Church in Neenah that provided daily contact, relationship and help. They also are receiving support through Zion Church in Appleton, which has a Congolese minister and a sizable Congolese congregation.

Amisi shared "You have given us everything we need. This doesn't seem possible, that I have my own room with a closet and new clothes and feel safe. That my family is safe. Thank you."



*The Abedi family, pictured here wearing 100% clothing from Community Clothes Closet. From left to right: Kapwata Abedi, Gilene Abedi, Dorika Abedi, Amisi Owayuma (mother), Willy Abedi*

## CHIPPIN IN FOR A CAUSE 2022

On July 21st, golfers hit the greens of Royal St. Patrick's Golf Links to support the Closet. With generous support from our sponsors and golfers, we beat last year's number and raised \$18,003. We look forward to seeing everyone out on the course again in 2023! **So save July 20, 2023 for next year's event.**



## HELP WAS THERE WHEN NEEDED

When we received a call from Pillars with a referral in desperate need, Lisa (CCC Executive Director) was able to bring him in for a personal shopping appointment that same day. Jerry was going through a very rough divorce and lost his job. His wife and children stayed in the apartment and he was living in his car. At the time of his visit, he had not had a clean set of clothing to change into for over a week.

Several times while shopping he commented how people were so nice and really helping him get his life back on track. The team at Pillars was working to find Jerry a secure place to live. He was scheduled to start a new job on Monday and, with our help, he now had a wardrobe in hard-to-find 3XL sizes. "Last Friday, I was admitted to the hospital as a threat to myself. I asked for help and help was there. This Friday, things are definitely looking up."

# "WITH HELP, YOU CAN DO IT"

Anyone who meets Crystal, sees an enthusiastic young woman who radiates positivity. But if you take the time to ask the right questions, you will understand the challenges she has overcome. Crystal has been a client at Community Clothes Closet for nearly five years, almost as long as she's lived in the Fox Valley. We recently spoke to her after choosing new clothes in the New Start Boutique.

"I am starting a new career, a new life" she explained. "I just graduated with a degree in Medical Administration. These clothes will get me started with my job at Evolve Healing in Appleton."

As a child, she had an abusive parent, suffered a traumatic brain injury, experienced homelessness and eventually turned to substance abuse. With grit and determination, Crystal is five years clean, raising three children, earned her degree and is excited to have a job with benefits. "Having clothes for me and the kids has been wonderful. And it's all free. What a huge help." When asked what she might say to others facing down the obstacles she's had, she shared "It doesn't matter who you are, with help you can do it."



*"Thank you so much for my set of sheets that I picked up there today. This is the first time I've had sheets in 15 years and I just appreciate it so much. Can't wait to go to bed tonight. God Bless."*

*"I am a single mom of a 15-year-old who has auto-immune issues. Help with clothing and hygiene has been a huge support to me. Words can't express how grateful I am."*

*"Thank you! My husband and I are currently living in a one-bedroom apartment with our three boys and are saving to get a bigger place. Getting clothes for free is just such a big blessing."*

## BACK-TO-SCHOOL MEANS NEW CLOTHES

August has been a whirlwind of events! Over four days, we helped nearly 900 kids get ready for the new school year. Cool for School happened on August 19 and 20. This annual client event provided brand new shoes, socks, undies and a new outfit to 526 deserving students. We had a special guest at Friday's event when Outagamie County supervisor Tom Nelson stopped by.

Two days before, on August 17 and 18, the Traveling Closet visited the Oshkosh Area School District's Back-to-School Fair. The Traveling Closet provided new school outfits to 350 at-risk middle and high schoolers, bringing the confidence that new school clothes provide to kids who may not have the opportunity for school shopping. This is a new partnership for the Closet and we look forward to being a resource for Oshkosh families into the future!



## DANNY'S DONATION

Danny is a 75-year-old veteran and was starting a new job that required steel toed boots. When staff assisted him in finding a pair in his size, Danny was so relieved that he became emotional. He was living in a hotel, often didn't have enough to eat but was hopeful that a steady job might improve his difficult existence.

Staff facilitated his enrollment for food assistance and volunteered to provide transportation to other social service agencies for help. He shared how his involvement with Community Clothes Closet has given him hope. "It's been a tough couple years, but I am turning the corner." Then he insisted on donating \$2. "I can't give much, but there is always someone who is worse off."





# COMMUNITY CLOTHES CLOSET

1465-B Opportunity Way | Menasha, WI 54952

**OUR MISSION:** Provide free clothing to all people in need.

## NEW GRAPHICS HIGHLIGHT SUPPORTERS



Our Shopping Floor got a bit brighter earlier this year when two signs were installed to recognize our valued partners and donors. Gifts were received in 2021 to celebrate the 40th anniversary of Community Clothes Closet. Donors who invested \$400 or more are recognized on a wall graphic, visible on the Shopping Floor.

We also installed a wall of thanks at the client entrance to recognize our business and foundation partners. We are able to change the list to acknowledge donations as they are received.

It is only because of the generosity of **ALL** of our donors that we are able to help our 4,000+ active clients. Thank you to everyone who gives what they can to meet the needs of those who need a bit of extra help.

