



SUBMISSION FORM

All submission forms must include the following information. Separate submission forms must be turned in for each eligible program. **Deadline: Friday, April 3, 2026.** Please include this submission form as the first page of your electronic entry. Contact [Gage Harter](#) with any questions.

PROGRAM INFORMATION

County: Henry County

Program Title: Coat Drive for Kids

Program Category: Health & Human Services

CONTACT INFORMATION

Name: Brandon Martin

Title: Public Information Officer

Department: Administration

Telephone: 276-634-2573 Website: www.henrycountyva.gov

Email: bmartin@henrycountyva.gov

SIGNATURE OF COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR OR DEPUTY/ASSISTANT COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR

Name: Dale Wagoner

Title: County Administrator

Signature: Dale Wagoner



Coat Drive

for kids



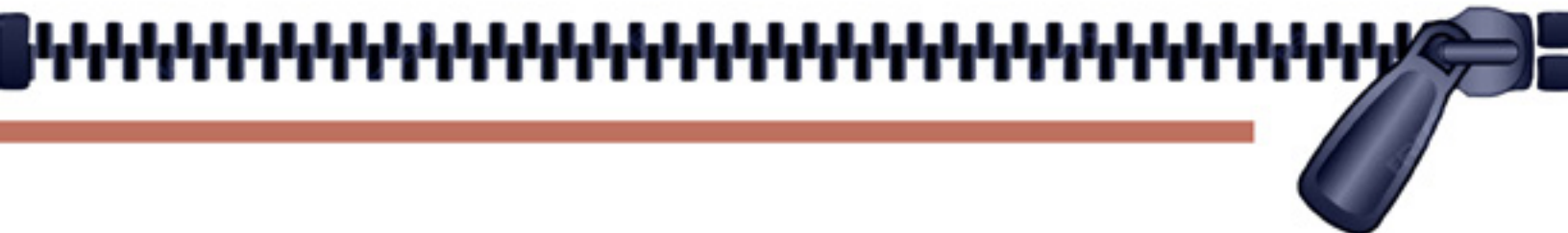
**HENRY
COUNTY**
COMMUNITY CONNECTED

Executive Summary

For thirty years, *Henry County's Coat Drive for Kids* has ensured that children and families have access to warm winter clothing, reducing cold-weather hardship while strengthening community partnerships and civic engagement. Launched in 1996 by Horsepasture District Supervisor Debra Buchanan as a small, home-based effort, the program has grown into a county-supported, community-driven initiative that has distributed more than **10,000 coats** to residents in need. This cumulative total equates to an average of approximately **330 coats annually**, representing **an estimated \$10,000 to \$13,000 in yearly cost avoidance** for families facing financial hardship.

Each year from September through November, the Coat Drive mobilizes residents, businesses, nonprofits, churches, and corporate partners to collect new and gently used coats, hoodies, and jackets for children and, when available, adults. Through partnerships with organizations such as One Hour Martinizing, the Matthew Wayne Wade Foundation, Appalachian Power Company, the Campbell Family Foundation, Walmart, and the Martinsville-Henry County Chamber of Commerce, the program operates efficiently and sustainably with minimal public expense.

The program addresses a persistent barrier for low-income families: the cost of winter clothing, which can range from **\$30 to \$40 per child** and often competes with necessities like food and heating fuel. By removing this burden, the Coat Drive for Kids promotes equity and dignity by ensuring children have access to quality winter clothing that supports their health, confidence, and well-being. Its longevity, adaptability, and reliance on strong public-private partnerships make it a proven, replicable model for local governments seeking low-cost, high-impact human services programs while strengthening trust and connection across the community.

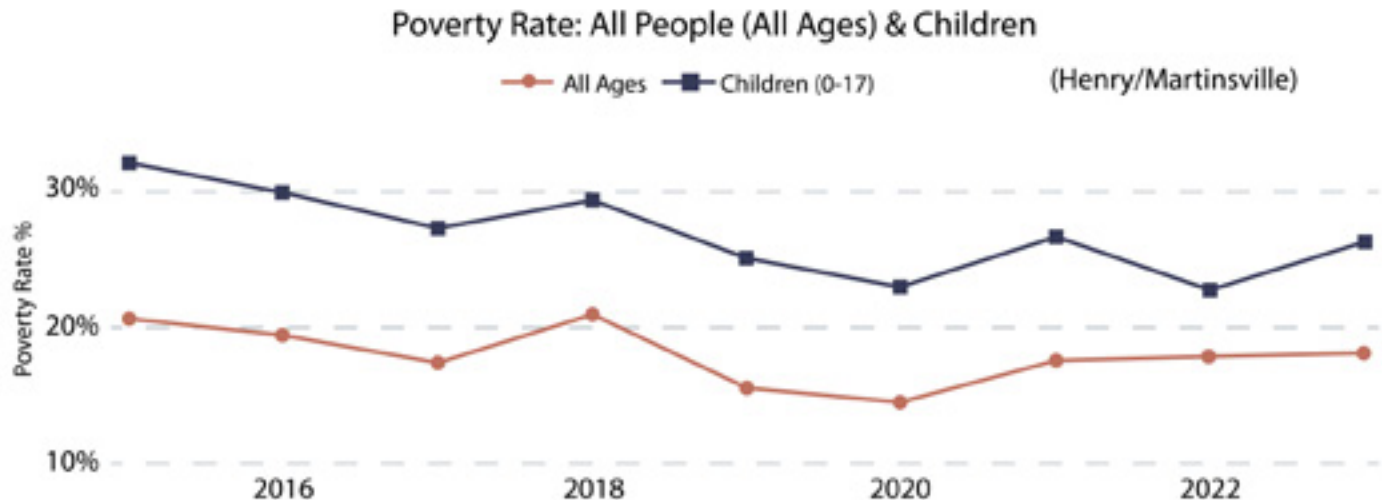


Program Narrative

The Challenge

Henry County faces persistent economic challenges that place a significant number of families at risk of material hardship, particularly during winter months. According to the 2023 U.S. Census Bureau Small Area Income and Poverty Estimates (SAIPE), approximately 11,256 residents, or **18 percent of the county's population, live in poverty**, substantially exceeding the statewide poverty rate of 10.2 percent.

The impact is even more pronounced among children. An estimated **3,437 children under the age of 18, or about 26 percent, lived in poverty** in 2023, more than double the statewide child poverty rate of 12.7 percent. These financial barriers make it difficult for families to purchase winter clothing, including coats that typically cost \$30 to \$40 per child, particularly for households with multiple children. Without adequate outerwear, children may face health risks, discomfort at school, and social stigma.



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Small Area Income and Poverty Estimates (SAIPE)

In rural communities such as Henry County, these challenges are compounded by transportation barriers and limited access to affordable retail options. Without a coordinated community response, families facing financial hardship may have few viable alternatives for meeting this basic seasonal need.

Program Description & Innovation

The Coat Drive for Kids was created to address this challenge through a simple yet highly effective model focused on dignity, accessibility, and community partnership. Established in 1996 by Horsepasture District Supervisor Debra Buchanan, the program began as a grassroots effort driven by personal commitment and direct community engagement. Over time, it evolved into a county-recognized initiative that has remained responsive to changing community needs while maintaining its original mission.

What distinguishes the Coat Drive for Kids as innovative is its long-term sustainability and adaptability. Rather than relying on a single funding source or formal service delivery system, the program leverages:

- Community donations of new and gently used coats
- Private-sector partnerships to eliminate cleaning and preparation costs
- Flexible distribution practices that accommodate children of all ages, sizes, and preferences, including hoodies favored by older students

Based on the program's cumulative distribution of more than 10,000 coats over 30 years, it provides an average of approximately 330 coats annually, representing an estimated \$10,000 to \$13,000 in annual cost avoidance for families facing financial hardship. This demonstrates not only the program's direct impact but also its efficiency in leveraging community resources to meet essential needs.



Partnerships & Collaboration

The success of the Coat Drive for Kids is rooted in strong and enduring public-private and nonprofit partnerships. Henry County government plays a convening and coordinating role, while local businesses, foundations, and civic organizations contribute financial support, in-kind services, and volunteer assistance.

Henry County's involvement ensures continuity, accountability, and countywide reach, allowing the initiative to persist beyond individual donations or short-term funding cycles. These partnerships allow the program to operate efficiently while maximizing its reach and reinforcing a shared sense of responsibility for the well-being of local children.

Partners

- **One Hour Martinizing**, a locally owned business, has partnered with the program for many years by professionally cleaning donated coats at no cost, ensuring that all items are distributed in clean, ready-to-wear condition.
- The **Matthew Wayne Wade Foundation**, a local nonprofit partner since 2013, provides annual contributions and outreach support.
- **Appalachian Power Company** and **The Campbell Family Foundation** have made significant donations, including coordinated efforts with local retail partners such as Walmart to supply new coats and hoodies.
- The **Martinsville-Henry County Chamber of Commerce** assists with awareness and community engagement.



Outcomes & Community Impact

Over its 30-year history, the Coat Drive for Kids has distributed more than 10,000 coats, providing warmth, comfort, and dignity to children and families across Henry County. Based on historical totals, this translates to an average of approximately 330 coats distributed annually, delivering an estimated \$10,000 to \$13,000 in annual cost avoidance for families.

The program's impact extends beyond the tangible provision of clothing. By removing a financial burden from households already facing economic hardship, the Coat Drive for Kids helps families redirect limited resources toward other essential needs such as food, heating fuel, and medical care. For children, receiving a warm coat they are proud to wear supports physical comfort, emotional well-being, and a sense of belonging at school and in the community.

By focusing on equity, the program ensures that children from low-income households have access to clothing that meets the same quality and style standards as their peers. This reduces stigma, promotes inclusion, and fosters confidence. County officials and community partners consistently note that the most meaningful outcomes are often intangible: the confidence of a child, the relief of a parent, and the continued trust built between residents and local government through visible, compassionate action.



**10,000 Coats
Distributed**



**\$10,000-13,000
in Cost Avoidance**



**Fostering a
Sense of Belonging**



Model for Other Local Governments

The Coat Drive for Kids is highly replicable. Any county can implement a similar program by:

- Identifying a local champion
- Partnering with a local dry cleaner or business for in-kind services
- Leveraging county communications channels for outreach
- Engaging nonprofit and corporate partners to expand donations

The program has operated continuously for three decades, demonstrating resilience through changing economic conditions, leadership transitions, and evolving community needs. It shows that effective human services do not always require large budgets. They require leadership, partnerships, and a commitment to meeting people where they are.

