



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Jack M. Martins

From the Desk of Senator Jack M. Martins

JACK M. MARTINS December 1, 2014

The Hall Closet Challenge

My wife and I just spent this fine Saturday morning sorting through the hall closet. Yes, you heard me correctly: the dreaded hall closet where coats, jackets, broken umbrellas, and mismatched shoes go to die; the black hole that gobbles up and forever conceals all that we so foolishly deposit in it; the booby trap packed so tightly that just removing shin guards can cause an avalanche of epic proportions. And here's the worst part: it was my idea. Now just to be clear, neither the dumbfounded look of surprise on my face nor the large Dunkin Donuts coffee I brought her prior to my suggestion did much to endear the idea to my wife but we tackled it for the sake of two really good causes and I'm asking you to do the same.

First is the annual New York Cares Coat Drive. This venerable nonprofit aims to collect 100,000 gently used coats for distribution to needy New Yorkers this winter. That may sound like a lot but in reality, if even half of the people reading this column were to donate just one coat, we'd have nearly 25,000 of them. And if your family is anything like ours, you probably have quite a few that have been relegated to the dustbin, forgotten or outgrown by children who need a new one every year.

I realize it's not easy at this busy time of year to start digging through closets, but it's only going to get busier as the holiday rush will soon sweep over even the most even-keeled

among us. Would it be possible to carve an hour out of your week to look for coats that can be donated? There are a number of convenient drop off locations in our area. In fact, many of our local auto dealerships serve as collection centers or you can visit www.newyorkcares.org/coat-drive to find one nearest you. Not only will you finally get around to cleaning out some closets, but in doing so you will make what could be a miserable winter a lot more bearable for a neighbor in need.

And while you're at it, might I ask that you also look for toys or games that have been unopened? I just kicked off my annual Holiday Toy Drive that invites neighbors and community organizations to donate new, unused toys to Winthrop University Hospital's Hagedorn Pediatric Inpatient Center. Those of you who are parents and grandparents, aunts and uncles, already know well the smiles of eager children as they tear open new Christmas toys. You also know that unlike when we were growing up, many of those toys remain unopened in a toy room or basement somewhere. Can you imagine the world of good one of those toys would do for the spirit of a sick child?

I won't sugarcoat this for you. For some of these little ones, it looks to be a grim holiday season from inside those hospital walls. But there is a team of caring professionals at Winthrop who work tirelessly to improve their spirits as well as their health. Will you give them a hand? This isn't some far off place you hear about on late night TV. This is our local hospital, where many of us have gone for care and these children are our neighbors. You can drop off toys at my district office at 252 Mineola Boulevard in Mineola or call us at (516) 746-5924 for more information.

Friends, I'll put it plainly. The holiday season will not be so cheerful for everyone. But if you consider taking the "Hall Closet Challenge" you just might make the holidays a bit brighter right here in our own neighborhood.