

# Bowie coat drive shows the charitable side of commerce

By Rachel Mauro.  
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The purpose of a grocery store is usually pretty straightforward. But for Shirlene Jackson, the new manager at Safeway in Bowie Town Center, she saw an opportunity for more than just commerce.

On the weekend of Feb. 2 and 3, Jackson set up a coat drive for charity at the front of the store, where 150 to 200 coats were collected in a large, cardboard box, along with scarves, hats, gloves, boots and blankets.

And, it did not take long for Jackson to decide to extend her efforts.

"People were asking us how long it was set up," she said. "I had decided on two days, not knowing that people would inquire."

Malva Dow, Assistant Store Manager at Safeway, said that she had received two calls on Sunday from nearby residents looking to donate their coats at a later date. The

coat drive is now extended until Friday.

"We are trying to reach out to the local community and let them know that we offer assistance however we can," she said.

The coats are to be donated to local churches and charities, though Jackson said she would be focusing more on charities.

Jackson, who has been at the Bowie Safeway for seven months, said her motivation was "just knowing that there are individuals who are less fortunate."

The coat drive depended on two things, she said, first was to see if the idea would work, and second was to set up a partnership with family-owned Bergman's Cleaning, which is located within the Safeway store.

"They volunteered to clean the coats for free," Jackson said. "We're sorting through them now and seeing if they're in good condition. Bergman's is going to clean the

coats, not fix their zippers. There were some brand new coats that were donated so we sorted them out and we sorted out the ones we can't do anything with."

Originally, the coat drive was supposed to attract volunteers from nearby Benjamin Tasker Middle School but due to the cold weather, only five students showed up during the weekend and set up the cardboard box, Jackson said.

Seeing this coat drive as a successful way to give back to the community, Jackson said she would try to plan it for earlier next season.

"I'm looking to do it again in October to catch people in need in the beginning of the winter," she said. "We can catch them at the start and help at the beginning."

Interested people can still donate to the coat drive by calling (301) 262-7992 or by driving to 4101 Northview Drive in Bowie Town Center.