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FEATURED

VFW Post partners with local business for year-round clothing drive

By Bill Seymour Special to the Independent
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The Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 152 North Kingstown's new clothing donation shed is located in the Carriage Inn parking lot.

Photo: Michael Derr

NORTH KINGSTOWN, R.I. — Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 152 is starting a year-round clothing drive to benefit local families or individuals, said Commander David Ainslie.

Post 152 has partnered with the Carriage Inn, 1065 Tower Hill Road, where the collection box will be located, and St. Pauly Textile Inc., a national company that buys used clothing and re-sells it to government and relief organizations.

“Our post is always looking for ways to help people in our community. We thought this was a unique way to help in several ways,” Ainslie explained.

He said that the local veterans’ organization can help by distributing used clothing to people in the community and any clothing remaining is collected by St. Pauly textile and distributed nationally and globally.

“We hope this becomes not just a VFW project, but rather a community project,” he said. Accepted items include clothing, shoes, belts, purses, blankets, sheets, curtains, pillowcases, and stuffed animals.

He said that St. Pauly Textile, located in Farmington, N.Y., was selected because it is family-run and would provide the shed for collecting and storing donated clothes.

“Carriage Inn in North Kingstown has been a great community partner with our VFW Post and they were very open to the idea of having a shed placed on their property for us. This is a good central location and easy for people to get to,” he said.

He said that volunteers from the post will sort through donations left in the shed, and newer items will be passed off to local social services agencies, Operation Stand Down Rhode Island and the Rhode Island Veteran’s Home Community Living Center.

St. Pauly’s website said that it pays from \$50 to \$200 on average per month to local organizations that host its clothing sheds. Ainslie said that the older clothing that St. Pauly pays to the post for collecting will help with fundraising for the post’s various activities.

This kind of collection occurs at hundreds of St. Pauly drop-off boxes in New England, New York and Pennsylvania at more than 1,100 locations.

“It is the most cost-effective way for these organizations around the globe to get large quantities of clothing for people in communities that they represent. All clothing is sold for pennies on the pound by St. Pauly Textile, Inc. and in large quantities at a time,” the company said on its website.

In 2021, St. Pauly shipped more than 81.3 million garments that benefitted an estimated 9.86 million people worldwide, the company said.

The North Kingstown veterans' organization has joined others in the region, including American Legion Post 88 off Chapel Street in Burrillville, using St. Pauly's program and shed as well.

Last year, Post 88 donated more than 50,000 pounds of clothing to the organization and even more was donated locally.

"I asked for people to volunteer, and we got plenty, right now we have about five people that on a regular basis come down here and look at things," said Post Commander Raymond Trinque.

"People throw stuff in bags, we go in and we make sure the bags are sealed and make sure things are in bags. If we find something that's really nice, we will keep it for the local people of Burrillville, Smithfield, veterans, and other organizations that support veterans."

North Kingstown's Ainslie said the approach is similar.

"It is almost identical to the American Legion in Burrillville. People donate bags of clothing or bedding to the shed. We have volunteers in the Post that check on it twice a week," he said.

As the winter months approach, Ainsley said the North Kingstown post will want various kinds of useful clothing-related items.

"Jackets and coats are always in big demand during the winter months, also blankets and bedding. Sweaters and loose-fitting clothes such as sweatpants and socks are always in demand at the Rhode Island Veterans Home," he said.

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