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www.houseofmercyva.org

**Media Announcement
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

Who knew shoes were so important?

House of Mercy presents the 8th Annual “Shoes for Kids”

MANASSAS, Va. –

The Eighth Annual “Shoes for Kids” Project, with LOTS of help from public donors, hopes to ensure that the majority of the client children between the ages of 4 -17 years (approximately 1,200 children) who have received aid from House of Mercy (HOM) will get a new pair of shoes of their choice. This will lessen the stigma of poverty and help ease “new school year” anxiety for the children who will receive shoes.

Low-income students are now the majority of schoolchildren attending the nation’s public schools, according to a research bulletin by the Southern Education Foundation in 2015. Data collected from the states by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES)¹, shows that 51 percent of the students across the nation’s public schools were low income in 2013. A map they provided indicates that 39% of the students in Virginia live in poverty.

The problem of ill-fitting, dilapidated or unfashionable shoes for school use is a problem closely associated with poverty. As reported in a publication by Samaritan’s Feet concerning schools in the United States, **school nurses report that shoes and socks are in the “Top 10 Items Schools Need You to Donate”^{2,3}**. A lack of adequate footwear is more than a simple inconvenience or lack of comfort. Educators and children's advocates say that at a time when children strive to keep up with social norms, attending school in ragged clothes and shoes is embarrassing and can hinder learning⁴. Children struggle daily with the humbling consequence of inadequate clothing and shoes.

Client parents at HOM want to give their children the new clothes and shoes they need but they cannot afford to do this. In addition, while several social service agencies in this community conduct backpack projects to provide school supplies, not one group except HOM provides shoes on a large scale to underserved children at the beginning of school.

Ann Cimini, Director at House of Mercy stated, “Our School Shoes program is so important. Most people don’t stop to think about school shoes. Shoes that don’t fit correctly can cause a child to walk poorly, with a limp or some other compensation. This limping can be a source of heckling or nicknames in school. Also, children as young as seven years old know which shoes are acceptable by fashion standards. Shoes that aren’t trendy are also a cause for ridicule. This can leave to bullying and kids playing hooky to avoid the heckling.”

At distribution, the HOM Client Services person displays two pairs of shoes to each child after asking general questions about colors and the types of shoes the child most closely identifies with. Then the child chooses the pair from the two displayed. Providing trendy shoes in a caring manner is the sort of thing House of Mercy does.

Please donate shoes valued at \$25 at the House of Mercy Donation Center. The Donation Center is open 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Monday through Saturday.

Footnotes:

1- <http://www.southerneducation.org/Our-Strategies/Research-and-Publications/New-Majority-Diverse-Majority-Report-Series/A-New-Majority-2015->

2- Champions for Kids. "Top 10 Items Schools Need You to Donate." 2015

3- World Health Organization. "Soil-Transmitted Helminth Infections." 2013

4- LA Times "Tattered Clothes of Poverty Prove Costly in Classroom", KRISTINA SAUERWEIN and ALLISON COHEN, 2000

For more information about House of Mercy's free classes, how to register as a client, or to donate financially, email help@houseofmercyva.org or call 703-659-1636.

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CAPTION: Ramon Tovar shows his new shoes with great pride. Although the goal this year is 192 pairs, it is the hope of House of Mercy to get thousands, enough for all of the client children.