Businessman Fits Children With New PJs

Providing children in need with a cozy pair of pajamas and a new book is the singular simple mission of the Pajama Program.

Now in its 10th year, the charity works to provide books and bedclothes to children—infants to teenagers—who live in shelters and group homes. The organization partners with 2,000 such places nationwide. Before she co-founded the program, Genevieve Piturro personally delivered pajamas to group homes. She quickly realized that many children slept in their daytime clothing.

“The fear when they lie down on a sofa or a futon in a strange place was overwhelming to me,” said Ms. Piturro.

“That’s not how kids should go to sleep. They should be comforted and feel tomorrow will be an OK day.”

The most critical time for donations is during the coldest months, October through March, but “the waitlist is longer than ever because of the economy,” she said. A set of pajamas and a book costs roughly $10.

And so, Westchester businessman David Kucera, 51 years old, is stepping in again to host “Stuff a Bus” this week, which will run until Friday.

Mr. Kucera owns County Coach Corp., transportation company and contributes the use of a school bus and driver for the annual effort. His combined donation of the bus and his personal gifts total about $35,000.

“Some of these kids don’t even know what pajamas are. Never wore a pair in their life,” said Mr. Kucera.

The bus visits schools and businesses around Westchester County and gets stuffed “from the back to the front” and “floor to ceiling” with pajamas and books, said Mr. Kucera.

The need is personal to Mr. Kucera, who lived for six years at the Andrus Children’s Center in Yonkers, N.Y. “A lot of these kids don’t have parents. I was one of those kids years ago. And I became successful in business and I saw an opportunity for me to help these kids,” he said.

This year’s goal for “Stuff a Bus” week is to collect 5,000 pair of pajamas and 2,500 books.

The items will be delivered to children in Westchester by Thanksgiving.

“When we go to these different shelters and hand these pajamas out, you see the faces light up on these kids. It’s wonderful,” said Mr. Kucera.