



CHURCH WORLD SERVICE

Best Gift



—STORY OF IMPACT—

What CWS Blankets mean to our neighbors in Washington State

This story was written by Holly Buchanan, a volunteer at a food bank in Snohomish County, Washington.

This was a good day at the food bank! The Pacific Northwest trifecta of cold, dark and rainy gave us a chilly drizzle today, and yesterday I heard on the news that we haven't had an officially sunny day in nearly two months. Argh. But the clients still showed up at the food bank early this morning, ready to load up their grocery carts for the week. We had an especially good supply of fresh eggs and milk today, and something very special to distribute: beautiful, clean, new CWS blankets!

Our food bank is one of twenty in the food bank coalition of Snohomish County. We are in a suburban area. Some of our clients are between permanent addresses; others are in stable housing but struggle to pay their bills. Some work low-wage jobs, others are looking for work or unable to work. The coalition ordered nearly a thousand blankets, as well as some CWS Kits, to distribute to families all over the county through the local food banks.

I was really surprised at the need for blankets among our clients. I thought we might give out four or five and that it might take several weeks to distribute the two bales of blankets CWS sent us. But we gave away 60 in an hour or so and ran out before we got to the end of the client line. I couldn't believe it!

As clients waited with their grocery carts to get their food, I approached each one with a blanket on my arm so they could see and feel it. I asked if anyone at home needed a blanket. Several exclaimed, "YEAH!" or "Sure do! Thanks!" Some just nodded their thanks. A few people said they had no need at the moment, but most were grateful for the offer and said it was nice that people who need blankets can get them.

The blankets are soft and thick, but not heavy. "The few blankets that I've had in the past are worn down and shredded, mainly because of use and age and being run through the laundry. These blankets are actually much more sturdy, and they feel really comfortable. I like them," one client observed.

I offered a blanket to a couple with two young children. They said that they are now living in stable housing, but they needed a clean blanket for their baby. The mom teared up when I handed her a blanket, and the dad looked relieved. The eyes of an older man lit up when he saw the blankets, and he hurried over to ask for two. A mom and her three adult children exchanged looks of relief when I approached with a blanket. They politely asked for three. One man who usually doesn't take much at the food bank took one—I understand he has many grandchildren and they need a lot of support. A woman came over to see the stack of blankets but said she didn't need one. A minute later she was back with a family with a new baby daughter—they were eager for a blanket for their little one.

Another client who took a blanket said that his place loses power pretty often, and that he'd think of us during the next big storm.

One of our volunteers, Kris, is also a food bank client and now a blanket recipient. **She has a message to share with everyone who supports the CWS Blankets program: "I have just received a blanket for my grandson, who is autistic, and he absolutely loves it. Thank you for all that you have done!"**

I understand that churches across the country support the CWS Blankets program so that more moments like this can happen each year. And if the reaction from each blanket recipient is like the ones I saw today, CWS is lighting up tens of thousands of faces each year. Thank you so much for your generosity!