

University of Denver's Tribal Wills Project Partners with Dependable Cleaners-Coats for Colorado Providing Winter Coats to Native American Tribal Members

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Originally established in 2015, the Tribal Wills Project at the University of Denver Sturm College of Law is again serving Native American tribes in more ways than one—by partnering with Dependable Cleaners-Coats for Colorado and delivering much needed warm coats to tribal members living on reservations. Denver Law students, along with volunteer supervising attorneys, have just returned from providing free, individually drafted wills for 100 tribal members at two reservations.

This is not the first year that Dependable Cleaners-Coats for Colorado has helped the Tribal Wills Project by providing coats to individuals living on tribal lands. The current donation of coats is in addition to a previous supply of coats for children, many of whom had never owned a winter coat. “They asked about ‘Denver Coats’ again,” said Steven Toltz, a Sturm College of Law alumnus and President of Dependable Cleaners Coats for Colorado. Toltz also volunteers to help law students draft appropriate documents for the clients served by the Tribal Wills Project.

Denver Law’s Tribal Wills Project is known to be the only such program in the country. To date, the Project has served tribal members on reservations in seven different states (Arizona, California, Colorado, Montana, New Mexico, South Dakota, and Utah), always at the invitation of the tribe or nation involved.

The Tribal Wills Project reflects a spirit of community giving. Private donations, along with funds from the Sturm College of Law, support this program that many law students value as a highlight of their legal education. They volunteer their time for the Project, as do the supervising attorneys who perform a two-level review of the students’ work on the wills, in effect donating hundreds of billable hours each trip. While the students gain valuable practical experience drafting wills, the cultural insights and community connections they also gain make this unique offering one of the most sought-after opportunities at Denver Law.

Thanks to local donors, Dependable Cleaners-Coats for Colorado—a nonprofit subsidiary of and founded by Dependable Cleaners and Shirt Laundry, Inc.—has collected, cleaned and distributed over two million coats in the Denver metro area since 1982. The Sturm College of Law is proud to join Dependable Cleaners-Coats for Colorado in supporting Native American tribes and promoting the mission of the University of Denver as a private institution dedicated to the public good.