**CHARITY SPEECH**

**FOR**

**LORI DEBRUIN**

Hello everyone! It’s so wonderful to see all of you here and in addition to having the gift of your presence, there’s so much for which to be grateful. This electric atmosphere tonight is, of course, due in large part to your collective presence, but especially to the wonderful music from this great band.... thank you Kasey Fairchild!!! And who wouldn’t want to commemorate every possible moment of this special event? I’d like to acknowledge our photographer, Reverend Gerry Murphy for being here and recording tonight’s festivities.... You know, ...many years ago, a wise songwriter said,”You got to have friends....”. Now I know why! Your energy and friendship fills this room and warms our collective hearts! We’ve gathered tonight as colleagues and confidantes, partners and neighbors, and maybe even secret “Santas,” joined together by so many common threads, not least of which have conspired to weave their way into conjuring up the hundreds (**is it more like thousands? If so, adjust**) of coats distributed by Coats for Kids throughout the years.

I believe it was Charles Dickens who said, “Dignity, and even holiness too, sometimes are more questions of coat and waistcoat than some people imagine.” For the past \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ years your collective thoughtfulness and generosity have provided so much more for the kids we serve than we will ever really understand. While all of you ask “What can I do to help,” you also serve with enthusiasm, compassion, and almost limitless optimism, and the value of your generosity increases **geometrically**. Giving a kid a coat or jacket means so much more than handing over a piece of clothing. I think that by now we can begin to understand just how much these coats mean to someone who really needs the benefit of our giving. A coat is more than something that provides warmth. It can represent security, confidence, and a sense of belonging. It can promote health and a greater sense of well being. It can increase the odds that the child wearing the coat that **YOU** sponsored.... that **YOU** made a reality, might have better attendance at school... might be more academically and socially engaged, might see a glimpse of promise for his or her future.....(**If you want to make a joke you can say**) ...or they might want their coat in a different color!!! (**And wait for the laugh**).

Your continued willingness and tenacity has given this cause wings.... I mean **SLEEVES**.... and collars and pockets to kids of all ages... some may think it’s just a coat.... the truth is, it’s one less thing for these kids and their parents to worry about..... and in case you don’t already know, I really, **REALLY** appreciate your willingness to give and give more. (**If you want to make a joke you can say**) ...and don’t think I haven’t noticed that instead of you thinking that I must be a pain in the neck, I really believe our shared mission, Coats for Kids, has brought us closer together.... and that is the gift that means the most.

The rest of that song lyric that I mentioned earlier continues,

“But you got to have friends.... the feeling’s oh so strong

You got to have friends.... to make the day last long...”

Thank you all for being just where you’ve been all these years. May our friendship and collective impact continue to flourish for a very, **VERY** long time!!! Thank you all! I love you!