

Advertiser Printing Co.
226 W. Laurens St.
Laurens, S.C. 29360

POSTAL CUSTOMER

Vol. No. 135
Pub. No. 30600

U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
LAURENS, SC
PERMIT NO. 148
ZIP CODE 29360

No. 56
6 Pages

The Extra

SATURDAY, JANUARY 12, 2019 • A PUBLICATION OF THE LAURENS COUNTY ADVERTISER

Acts of warmth

Clark continues family tradition of giving with 'Coats of Kindness and More'

By Judith Brown
Staff Writer

In the four years since Laurens resident Shirley Clark began distributing coats from the trunk of her car, she's given away close to 5,000 coats, jackets or sweaters, and she doesn't see an end in sight for the need or the supply, which is why she opened a storefront at 205-C Fleming Street about a year ago.

A long-time District 55 employee, Clark said she first got the idea from a little boy at one of the schools who consistently didn't have a coat even on the coldest days, and he finally admitted to her that he didn't have one. And though that prompted her decision to begin collecting and giving away gently used warm clothing, the concept of "Ms. Shirley's Mission" was really based on the life of her grandmother, Shirley P. Dial.

"She was always called Ms. Shirley, and she was a giver," Clark said. "She opened a tiny neighborhood store on Winette Street, just off South Harper Extension, where she sold grits and crackers and other essentials, and if you couldn't pay for it she'd just tell you to come back and pay her a little bit whenever you could."

Mrs. Dial was also the midwife for her neighborhood, and her concept of feeding the neighborhood went far beyond credit for a few grocery items. She also provided holiday meals to those who might not get them.

"She cooked for Beasley's Nursing Home and she would just supply the community with food. She was a remarkable lady," Clark said, "so when I started giving out coats I would always see her giving things out."



COLLECTOR AND GIVER OF COATS — Shirley Clark, founder of Coats of Kindness and More, said she came by her name and her desire to give to others from her grandmother, who always felt it her responsibility to provide food and godly service to her South Harper Street area community. She no longer ministers from the trunk of her car, but rather on Saturday mornings and by appointment from the shop at 205-C Fleming.

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County deaths in 2018 increase by 1 over 2017

By John Clayton
Editor

A total of 583 people died in Laurens County in 2018, a three-year high according to statistics released this past week by the Laurens County Coroner's Office.

The total was one higher than the 582 deaths in 2017 and still significantly higher than the 483 deaths recorded in 2016.

Other than natural causes, which accounted for 500 deaths in the county, motor vehicle-related deaths made up the largest category.

The 35 vehicle-related deaths, which includes three pedestrians, was part of a trend of increased highway fatalities in the county over the past three years. The county recorded 29 such fatalities in 2017 and 22 in 2016.

The number of suicides more than doubled this past year from 2016. Twenty-one suicides were recorded in 2018, compared to 13 in 2017 and 10 in 2016.

There were also a dozen deaths due to drug overdoses in 2018, up from eight in 2017 and 10 in 2016.

(Continued on page 2)

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