The Children’s Hope Chest's Year-round Community Programs by Toni Rufeh

An accomplished project and business management professional, Toni Rufeh has lived and worked in the Westchester County area all her life. Her firm, Rufeh Associates, located in Armonk, New York, specializes in recruiting for the defense industry. Toni Rufeh supports a broad range of philanthropic and community endeavors, among which the Children’s Hope Chest is one of her favorites.

Founded in 2005, the Children’s Hope Chest grew quickly and established a year-round core of meaningful programs for children. Now headquartered in Purchase, New York, the group reaches out to help hundreds of disadvantaged and vulnerable children in Westchester and the Bronx.

[The Children’s Hope Chest](http://www.hopechest.org/%E2%80%8E) strives to include the whole family in its Hope for the Holidays Program. They invite parents to a special “shopping” event, where they choose the best gifts for their children from among a wide variety of clothing and small toys. They wrap the gifts on the spot and bring them home for Christmas. The simple step of including parents in the process helps families retain their dignity while letting them select items they know their children most need or want.

The Children’s Hope Chest is active year-round. Through the Backpack Buddy Program, for example, they give children brand-new backpacks filled with a year’s worth of school supplies as school is starting. A few weeks later, when the colder weather sets in, they distribute hundreds of warm winter coats in the Coats for Hope program. The Food for Hope Program conducts periodic food drives throughout the year to help keep local food pantries stocked. Another program helps children celebrate their birthdays.

If the Hope for the Holidays Program is a winter favorite, Hope for the Summer is the summertime favorite. This program provides bedding, toiletries, and other summer camp essentials to children attending YMCA summer camp who do not have these necessities. Information about participating in the Children’s Hope Chest is available at www.childrenshopechest.com/help.html.