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## **Assistance League® of San Luis Obispo County Celebrates 30 Years of Service to Local Communities Named “Best of Central Coast Nonprofit” by the SLO Tribune**

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This month marks a milestone anniversary for the charitable nonprofit, Assistance League® of San Luis Obispo County (ALSLOC). For 30 years, this organization has transformed the lives of students and their families by providing new clothing to children in need. During this time, they have enriched the lives of more than 42,000 students throughout the county, Kindergarten through 12th grade. In the last year alone, more than 100 volunteers worked to clothe over 2,100 students.

*The passion and dedication of the members of our organization is as strong today as it was 30 years ago,” stated Barbie Butz, the founding president of Assistance League of San Luis Obispo County. “What’s changed - and what we are ever grateful for - is the expanded number of volunteers, donors, and partnerships that have all led to our ability to grow from helping 130 students in our first year to now serving more than 2,100 students in need. To bring that number to life, just think about filling the CalPoly Performing Arts Center TWICE over!”*

Since its founding, ALSLOC has partnered with every school district in the county to identify students in need and coordinate clothing distributions with their families through Operation School Bell®. What began as a program to clean and mend donated clothing to provide to disadvantaged students, has evolved into a modern retail-based model. Today, through partnerships with Kohl’s and Old Navy, students shop alongside member volunteers to select new, school-appropriate clothing and shoes, the value of which averages \$200 per student.

*“As Superintendent of Lucia Mar Unified School District, I have seen Assistance League’s Operation School Bell give our students far more than new clothes,” stated Dr. Paul Fawcett. “When students are able to choose new clothing of their own, they build confidence, dignity, and a true sense of belonging. When a child feels comfortable and proud of what they’re wearing, it positively impacts attendance, engagement, and overall academic success.”*

In 2023, ALSLOC expanded its mission with the launch of the Access to Career Education (ACE) scholarship program. ACE provides scholarships to local high school graduates with financial need, who are enrolled in Cuesta College career education and trades programs.

These funds help to cover costs such as required tools and materials that might otherwise be a barrier to course completion. This year, ALSOC provided a total of \$10,000 in scholarships.

Funding for ALSLOC programs comes from grants, private donations, and the revenue generated by the Assistance League Thrift Store in San Luis Obispo, which recently celebrated its own 10th anniversary. Last year, the value returned to the community was \$694,015, which includes nearly 25,000 hours of volunteer service.

ALSLOC is supported by more than 125 members and community volunteers who dedicate their time and talents to operating the thrift store, raising funds, implementing Operation School Bell, and supporting additional programming. The organization is a chapter of National Assistance League®, founded in the mid-1890s and formally established in Los Angeles in 1925.

*“As the needs of students in San Luis Obispo County continue to grow—particularly as the percentage of students living at or below the poverty line has increased from 48% to 53%—we remain committed to expanding our capacity to serve,”* said Chapter President Sharon Darnton. *“We invite community members to learn more about our mission, membership opportunities, and ways to support our work.”*

More information about Assistance League of San Luis Obispo County is available at [www.alslocounty.org](http://www.alslocounty.org), on Facebook and Instagram, or by visiting the Assistance League Thrift Store at 667A Marsh Street in San Luis Obispo.