

First Zion's Closet to Help Students and Families in Need

The concept of Zion's Closet is rooted in Dr. Terence Lester's personal experience with homelessness. He is now executive director of Love Beyond Walls.

ATLANTA, GA, UNITED STATES, April 23, 2025 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Inspired by their IVP Kids book [Zion Learns to See](#), the father-daughter writing team of Terence and Zion Lester are turning their written words into action with Zion's Closet, a resource to benefit students whose families are experiencing homelessness or in transient housing and parents trying to make ends meet.

The first closet is launching in April 2025 at William M. Finch Elementary in Atlanta, Georgia. This impactful initiative is the result of a partnership between Larry Nance Jr. of the Atlanta Hawks and [Love Beyond Walls](#), the organization that [Dr. Terence Lester](#) founded to raise awareness about poverty, homelessness, and community mobilization.

"Zion's Closet represents a shared vision to offer a supportive and inclusive environment as well as an essential resource hub to help schools address the needs of students who are impacted by extenuating circumstances beyond their control," said Lester. "Our goal is to have Zion's Closets installed in as many schools as possible throughout Georgia and expand to other states as well."

According to the Kids Count Data Center, 18 percent of school-aged children in Georgia live under the federal poverty threshold. Zion's Closet aims to bridge the gap by providing access to essential items for students from kindergarten to high school, easing the financial burden on families and helping students focus on their education.



Zion's Closet was inspired by the father-daughter authored book Zion Learns to See.



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Dr. Terence Lester

The concept of Zion's Closet is rooted in Lester's personal experience with homelessness and his commitment to community advocacy. Reflecting on a pivotal moment at Love Beyond Walls, Lester recalled seeing a young girl in tears because she was being bullied for wearing the same uniform every day.

"As I left the school that day, deeply moved, I contemplated how we could expand our closet initiative and educate other students to be more empathetic and kinder. It

became clear that we needed to teach them about the various challenges their peers might face at home, a lesson that ideally should come from their parents and caregivers.

"This experience underscored the importance of instilling compassion and understanding in children from an early age. Without instilling values such as love, compassion, justice, dignity, mercy, and grace, we risk raising a generation indifferent to the hardships of others."

Also the author of *I See You, When We Stand, All God's Children*, and the forthcoming *From Dropout to Doctorate*, Lester shared, "Zion Learns to See represents more than just another book project; it's a deeply felt journey of embedding crucial life lessons in our children, with the hope that such empathy is shared with other children, too."

Inspired by real-life events, *Zion Learns to See* tells the story of how Zion went to work with her dad and quickly discovered that a day at the community center brought new and wonderful people into her life. She learned about people experiencing homelessness and was ultimately moved to respond.

Zion was 7 then. She is now 16 and has become a dedicated community leader, writer, and speaker. From volunteering at Love Beyond Walls to inspiring her peers, she remains committed to serving others.

"From a young age, I've been actively involved in serving those experiencing homelessness through my dad's organization, participating in various projects like organizing collections, conducting food giveaways, setting up closets in schools, and discussing the issue with peers," Zion said. "My parents have always taught me that we love our neighbors as ourselves and we put God first. Loving others is an act of service, and serving is crucial because it extends God's love to others and treats people with dignity, affirming their worth regardless of their circumstances."

In support of Love Beyond Walls, InterVarsity Press (IVP) will donate a portion of the proceeds from the sale of *Zion Learns to See* to support Zion's Closets in schools. For more information about Zion's Closet and to support this initiative visit LoveBeyondWalls.org.

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