

Coat provides warmth and jobs to Detroit's homeless

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Six years ago, Veronika Scott accepted a challenge from her **college** professor: Design something to "fill a need" in Detroit, Michigan where they lived in the USA.

Scott, an art student, found her inspiration on the streets.

5 "In Detroit, there's this large homeless population, and they

kind of just disappear into the landscape," Scott said. "I **wanted** to design for this whole population of people that we just don't see."

In 2010, Scott created a fully insulated, waterproof jacket that converts into a sleeping bag and knapsack. She called it the EMPWR coat.

10 "So many people on the streets are wearing somebody else's trash," said Scott, now 26.

"The coat itself was meant to offer people warmth...but also to give them a little bit of **pride**."

But Scott's work was far from **finished**. As she handed out the coats one day, a woman in a shelter shouted, "We don't need coats. We need jobs."

15 Today, Scott and her nonprofit, the Empowerment Plan, hire homeless individuals from local shelters to help manufacture the coats. Employees **receive** training and other support **services** to help them get their lives back on track. Scott says "What it really comes down to is motivation—that the biggest motivating factor and what gets people up in the morning isn't just getting a paycheck, but creating that better life for their family. "

20 "Growing up, both my parents struggled with unemployment and addiction. We were constantly moving around. When you're **raised** in someone else's rock bottom, it shapes how you look at the world. For me, it was really difficult. I wanted to create an opportunity that I wish my parents had when I was a kid. "

25 "When I first **started** Empowerment Plan, this community was there to support me in doing this, helping me craft something from nothing. It was amazing how individuals in this **area** that are chronically homeless were helping me create something to fill a need they have—all the way to **giant** corporations here that normally would not pay attention to a design student with an idea about making coats."

Since 2012, the group has made and **distributed** more than 15,000 free coats for the homeless nationwide and around the world.

