

2017



**OPERATION
BACKPACK®**



OperationBackpackNYC.org

WANTED:

**20,000 BACKPACKS FILLED WITH SCHOOL SUPPLIES FOR
CHILDREN IN NEW YORK CITY HOMELESS SHELTERS**

**Volunteers of America-Greater New York Launches
14th Annual Operation Backpack®**

Drive to collect 20,000 backpacks & school supplies kicks off July 10 and runs through August 4.

(July 10, 2017 – New York, NY) More than 22,000 children live in New York City's homeless shelters and most of them are school age.

And even as the summer season is kicking into high gear, **one local nonprofit is gearing up for September to make sure that every child living in a New York City homeless or domestic violence shelter who needs one, gets a new, top-quality backpack filled with every imaginable supply** – all in time for the first day of school.

Operation Backpack®, the community service initiative of **Volunteers of America-Greater New York** (VOA-GNY) now in its 14th year, has outfitted more than 140,000 homeless NYC students, grades Pre-K-12, with backpacks. Last year alone, the initiative fulfilled every request it received from a homeless or domestic violence shelter: 19,000 in total.

Operation Backpack® is 100% dependent on support from the community and there are several ways that New Yorkers and visitors alike can help. A cash donation allows VOA-GNY to purchase, at highly-discounted prices, the critically-needed, grade-specific supplies required to fill 11,000 empty backpacks that have been donated. The average cost to fill a backpack is \$87 – an expense very few families in shelters can afford. The younger the child, the less expensive the backpack; the older the student, the higher the cost as their backpacks include a USB drive, geometry kit, scientific calculator, full-size dictionary and thesaurus, and student planner along with all the usual supplies.

Starting on Monday, July 10, New Yorkers can also participate by purchasing, filling and donating brand new, top-quality backpacks and bringing them to [official drop locations](#) across the City no later than August 4.

Here's a small sample of the many items that fill the backpacks: calculator, geometry set, spiral notebooks, composition notebooks, washable markers, index cards, 3-ring binders, lined paper, subject dividers, graph paper, dictionary, glue sticks, white glue, watercolors, USB drives and tens of thousands of other essential school supplies.

"The sad fact is that more than 20,000 homeless children, right here in New York City, cannot afford even the most basic school supplies. This puts them at a devastating disadvantage," said Operation Backpack® founder Rachel Weinstein, who also serves as VOA-GNY's Vice President/Chief Development and Communications Officer. "Operation Backpack® is helping prepare these deserving kids for success in school. With help from everyday New Yorkers, they will walk into the classroom with a fully stocked backpack, just like their classmates, ready to face the school year with hope and dignity and without the stigma that comes with being a child in need."

"The success of Operation Backpack® would not be possible without the incredible outpouring of support from the corporate community, individuals and families, places of worship, elementary schools and colleges, you name it. This truly is a citywide effort and Volunteers of America-Greater New York is committed to fulfilling every backpack request we receive for a child who calls a NYC shelter 'home,'" Weinstein added.

It is anticipated that more than 200 companies and community groups will participate in this year's campaign, with many new partners already signed on. Official financial sponsors this year include **HSBC, Walgreens/Duane Reade, and JPMorgan Chase & Co.** Major in-kind sponsors include **RXR Realty, OOH PITCH, New York City Department of Education, HarperCollins Publishers** and **FedEx.**

Here's how the community can help:

- Purchase and fill new backpacks and bring them to official drop locations from July 10th to August 4th. A list of Official Drop-off locations can be found [HERE](#).
- For a list of the grade-specific items that go into the backpacks, click here: <http://www.voa-gny.org/what-goes-in-a-backpack>.
- The public can build fundraising teams on VOA-GNY's behalf by going [HERE](#) and asking family and friends to donate.
- Financial donations will help VOA-GNY purchase items still needed including 6,464 sets of colored pencils; 2,776 scientific calculators; 6,766 glue sticks; 2,816 fine line washable markers; 7,016 assignment planners; 28,390 composition books; and more. Financial donations can be made at www.crowdrise.com/OperationBackpackNYC. For larger gifts, contact Rachel Weinstein at rweinstein@voa-gny.org or 212-496-4305.
- VOA-GNY is seeking additional financial and major in-kind sponsors including those who would like to "adopt a product," for instance the 28,390 composition books at a negotiated price of \$14,195. To learn more, please contact Rachel Weinstein at rweinstein@voa-gny.org or 212-496-4305.

VOA-GNY's back-to-school campaign began in New York City in 2002 as a small effort to collect school supplies for vulnerable children in homeless shelters operated by the organization. After growing exponentially – the result of public support – the program was re-branded as Operation Backpack® in 2004. It has become a national model and has been replicated at VOA affiliates around the country.

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ABOUT VOLUNTEERS OF AMERICA-GREATER NEW YORK: **Volunteers of America (VOA)** has been at the forefront of social service since 1896, helping individuals and families in need across the country overcome obstacles to living safe, healthy and productive lives. Locally, tens of thousands of men, women and children in need benefit from **Volunteers of America-Greater New York's** life-changing, often life-saving work, including the homeless, families affected by domestic violence, children with special needs, adults living with HIV/AIDS, behavioral health or substance use issues, veterans struggling to find their footing and the frail elderly.

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