



Operation Backpack

Give Back. Give a Pack. 2011

VOLUNTEERS OF AMERICA LAUNCHES OPERATION BACKPACK 2011 FOR NEW YORK CITY'S HOMELESS CHILDREN

CAMPAIGN RUNS JUNE 27 through JULY 24

(New York, NY) Volunteers of America will launch OPERATION BACKPACK 2011, their 9th annual drive to collect brand new backpacks and school supplies for the thousands of children living in New York City shelters. The campaign kicks off on Monday, June 27, and will continue through July 24. In a continuing partnership with Volunteers of America, every Duane Reade location will accept donations of new backpacks and school supplies from the public. Dozens of companies, schools, community groups, and religious institutions will also host collection drives. On July 25, FedEx will contribute an entire day of services to collect the donations to be sorted and packed, in a commercial space generously provided by RXR Realty. From there, the grade-specific backpacks will be distributed to children in shelters in time for the start of the school year. Last year Volunteers of America outfitted more than 7,000 homeless children with new, filled backpacks. This year, the goal is to help more than 9,000 children.

One of the most devastating consequences of homelessness is the impact it has on a child's education. Thousands of school-age children are living in New York City homeless shelters. Most of them would face the start of school in September without basic school supplies if not for Operation Backpack. Relieving their parents of yet another financial burden, the program raises public awareness about the needs of homeless families and the impact homelessness has on a child's education. Paige Davis, well-known host of TLC's Trading Spaces and seasoned Broadway actor, is a VOA Board Member and spokesperson for Operation Backpack. "Operation Backpack is one of the highlights of my year. It's joyful to see the effort that our volunteers and corporate sponsors of all ages put into this campaign, sorting and stuffing thousands of backpacks. Knowing that people from all walks of life come together to ensure these kids start the school year off right, with everything from pencils and crayons to protractors and calculators, is simply inspiring."

Volunteers of America is delighted to have the support of Operation Backpack financial sponsors **Frank Crystal and Company, Duane Reade, Amherst and Warnaco**. Major in-kind sponsors are News Corp, FedEx, Dickstein Shapiro, HarperCollins, Time Warner, Van Wagner and Martha Stewart Living Omnimedia. Currently, 90 companies and groups have joined the effort. Organizations interested in getting involved should contact Kristin Kelly-Jangraw at kkjangraw@voa-gny.org. The public is urged to drop new backpacks and school supplies at any Duane Reade or CitiHabitats in New York City from June 27 to July 24. For grade-appropriate packing lists and other drop locations visit www.OperationBackpackNYC.org.

ABOUT OPERATION BACKPACK

Volunteers of America's back-to-school drive began in 1999 as a small effort to collect school supplies for the children in its shelters. In 2003 the campaign was re-branded "Operation Backpack" to reflect its ambitious, new goal: to give every child in the New York City shelter system who needs one, a new backpack filled with grade-specific school supplies. Operation Backpack has become so successful that it is now held in other VOA locations across the country.

ABOUT VOLUNTEERS OF AMERICA

Volunteers of America is one of the nation's oldest and largest human services organizations, serving nearly 50,000 people in need in the Greater New York area every year. Their mission is to empower the men, women and children they serve to live safe, healthy, and productive lives. From preschoolers with developmental delays to older adults wishing to age at home rather than face institutionalization; from families recovering from domestic violence to youth about to age out of foster care, Volunteers of America—Greater New York offers practical and compassionate support to thousands of the most vulnerable men, women and children in our community each year. For more information about Volunteers of America, please visit www.voa-gny.org

CONTACT: Paul Batsel, (212) 496-4310, pbatsel@voa-gny.org



Volunteers of America®

