

BLOG

Foundation Delivers Free Backpacks

9/2/2025



Barton Elementary students with Sarah
Testa with Proctor Construction

(Press Release) (Lake Worth, Fla.) – More than 30,000 Palm Beach County students started the school year with brand new free backpacks filled with school supplies, thanks to the Education Foundation of Palm Beach County. The Foundation and its community partners delivered the stuffed bags during back-to-school events across 48 Title 1 elementary schools, grades K – 5.

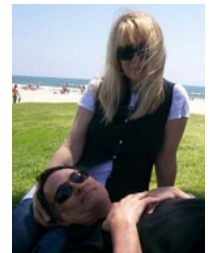
The Education Foundation of Palm Beach County serves as a nexus between public schools, the private sector and the community. The Foundation awards grants and scholarships and operates over 100 programs that close achievement gaps in learning, prepare students for post-secondary success and create positive, measurable change for over 100,000 students.

“When we started the backpack initiative seven years ago, we handed out 2,500 bags,” said James Gavrilos, President and CEO of the Education Foundation of Palm Beach County. “This year our goal was 30,000 and we filled 30,543! It’s a sad statistic that nearly 40,000 children in Palm Beach County live below the poverty level and will return to school without basic supplies like pencils, backpacks and glue sticks. A backpack filled with supplies is one of the simplest solutions to inequity in the classroom. But it’s more than that. It provides hope, motivation and opportunity for a child.”

The backpack initiative is part of the Foundation’s signature program, Red Apple Supplies, a free resource store for teachers from the highest-need schools in the School District of Palm Beach County to stock their classrooms with school supplies. Since opening in 2016, Red Apple Supplies has distributed over \$8 million in school supplies. By the end of the 2024-2025 school year, the program included 96 schools with an eventual goal of serving all 183 schools in the District.

The program is vital to Palm Beach County as teachers typically spend anywhere from \$500 - \$800 annually out-of-pocket for supplies students can’t afford.

“We want to thank all our partners and volunteers who helped fill the backpacks and deliver them to

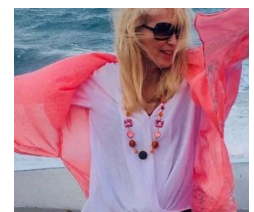


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thousands of happy children," said Teresa West, Chief Engagement Officer for the Education Foundation. "It was only possible because of the community's support. It's not just about handing out school supplies — it's about showing students that they are supported and valued. Watching a child's face light up when they receive a new backpack is a powerful reminder of why we do this work. It's a small gesture that can have a lifelong impact."

Sponsors that supported the initiative included Amazon, Bentek, B&I Contractors, Carrier, CORE Construction, Gehring Group, Gold Coast Federal Credit Union, Good Greek Moving and Storage, Gunster, Jezerinac Group, NCCI, Office Depot, Proctor Construction, U.S. Sugar, Palm Beach Sheriff's Office, Polen Capital, Pratt & Whitney, Seacoast Bank, Universal Engineering Sciences, United Franchise Group, Ventus Charitable Foundation, Wharton-Smith, Guardian Fleet Services, Comcast, NAI/ Merin Hunter Codman, Goldman Sachs, Wycliffe Charities Foundation, The GEO Group and The Weitz Company.

For more information on the Education Foundation, please visit educationfoundationpbc.org. To make a donation or become a community partner, please contact Teresa@EducationFoundationPBC.org or call 561-351-7196.

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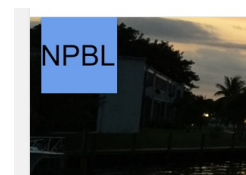
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[July 2025](#)
[June 2025](#)
[May 2025](#)
[April 2025](#)
[March 2025](#)
[February 2025](#)
[January 2025](#)
[December 2024](#)
[November 2024](#)
[October 2024](#)
[September 2024](#)
[November 2023](#)
[October 2023](#)
[May 2023](#)
[December 2022](#)
[December 2021](#)
[November 2020](#)
[October 2018](#)
[April 2017](#)
[April 2016](#)
[March 2016](#)
[February 2016](#)
[January 2016](#)

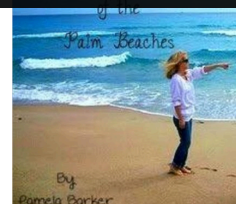
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