



## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **Local Youth-Led School Supply Drive Provides Nearly 650 Students With a Prepared Start to the School Year**

For the 11th year, local nonprofit organization Hands4Hope - Youth Making A Difference's youth-led School Supply Committee has collected, sorted, and distributed new backpacks and school supplies to nearly 650 students in need.

Operating through an after-school Committee structure, 15 middle and high school age youth who reside from Folsom to Placerville began meeting in early May. First, they worked with local businesses from Folsom to Placerville to host donation collection bins. They coordinated with El Dorado Hills Town Center and El Dorado County Office of Education to host a "Stuff the Bus" event on July 17, which was also the ending date for most collection sites. These efforts resulted in the collection of more than 28,000 items, including 745 backpacks; which amount to a collective estimated value of \$46,000.

Margaret Lewis, the McKinney-Vento Services Coordinator for El Dorado County Office of Education, explained: "In the 2023-24 school year, 855 children in Kindergarten through 12th grade experienced homelessness while attending El Dorado County schools. These children, and others who are in families living too close to the Federal poverty line, may go without items they need at the start of school. By providing access to these supplies for free through the Hands4Hope distribution event, their families can then redirect their resources toward other opportunities or needs."

After the Hands4Hope School Supply Committee held three donation sorting days and one set-up day, they were ready to host the distribution event on August 6 at Louisiana Schnell Elementary School in Placerville. At that event, 530 students in grades kindergarten through high school received backpacks and supplies, and their families also were exposed to additional community resources who offered information booths to assist with health, medical, educational, and other support. An additional 103 backpacks full of supplies were distributed in the days following the event through community partners and direct distribution, resulting in a total of 640 students served. Remaining supplies continue to be distributed through community partners, benefiting even more students.

All in all, the 15 youth School Supply Committee participants planned and coordinated a total of 7 events that involved 118 volunteer spots filled by an additional 19 youth participants. All together, these volunteers, along with 6 adult & alumni volunteer leaders, contributed 450 service hours toward the overall effort. Along the way, youth learned and practiced real-life skills such as collaboration, communication, and leadership.

“My favorite part about leading the Hands4Hope School Supply Drive Committee was being able to see the Committee’s hard work pay off when the all the kids got excited to pick out the school supplies they wanted for the upcoming school year,” said Addison Hunt, Committee Chair, and an Oak Ridge High School senior.

More than two dozen businesses and organizations hosted Hands4Hope collection bins so donors had convenient locations to drop off backpacks and supplies, or they hosted their own in-house drives. They include: 24 Carrot Farms, Allworth Financial, Big Apple Bagels (EDH), Benefit and Risk Management Services (BRMS), BT Consulting, Cold Springs Church, Datwyler Orthodontics, EDC Sheriff's Office, El Dorado County Government Center (Placerville), El Dorado Hills Community Services District, Face in a Book, Friends of Folsom / Reliance Home Loans, Grado Construction, Heritage Community, Horn Fulton Certified Public Accountants, Intel, Lyons Orthodontics, Minis House of Pain, ONYX Real Estate, Snap Fitness (Shingle Springs), Snap Fitness 24-7 (EDH), Thompson Family of Dealerships, Veerkamp Engineering, Vintage Grace (EDH & Placerville).

In addition to the many donations provided by community members, the drive was generously supported by Ferguson Financial and David and Sharon Handler, whose financial donations allowed Hands4Hope youth committee members to shop for remaining needed supplies for the distribution, and to support a local elementary school with much needed supplies.

Hands4Hope – Youth Making A Difference is a nonprofit, youth-driven organization with the mission to inspire and empower youth in leadership and service. It offers hands-on education and community engagement opportunities to youth from kindergarten through 12th grades through school-based and after-school programs in Sacramento and El Dorado counties. For more information visit: [hands4hopeyouth.org](http://hands4hopeyouth.org) or call (916) 294-7426.

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Hands4Hope School Supply Committee youth participants coordinated 25 donation collection sites, sorted and documented 28,000 items, and distributed them to 640 (and counting) students in need.



Hands4Hope Committee leaders provided instruction and guidance to their peers to keep the distribution event running smoothly. Youth participants led students in grades K-12 through stations to “shop” for everything they needed for school, from a new backpack to markers, pencils, calculators, notebooks, binders, and more.





The "Stuff the Bus" event was held July 17 in the El Dorado Hills Town Center Target parking lot.



Hands4Hope youth participants of all ages were able to attend three different sorting events to process and prepare the donations for efficient distribution.

