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Local Youth-Led School Supply Drive Provides More Than 700 Students With a Prepared Start to the School Year

By: Aiden Chemmannure

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Hands4Hope - Youth Making A Difference has held an annual youth-led School Supply Drive over the summer for the past 10 years. These drives have helped thousands of families in need throughout El Dorado County receive necessary school supplies before the school year starts. The youth-led committee of 20, planned and coordinated the collection, organization, and then distribution of thousands of vital school supplies and backpacks to students in all grades on August 4th at Louisiana Schnell Elementary School in Placerville.

The committee anticipated an increased need among the county's students, so they responded with increased collection efforts. For four months, the School Supply Committee worked hard to collect enough backpacks and various school supplies to supply hundreds of families. The subcommittee in charge of collections worked with local businesses and organizations to collect the needed backpacks and supplies. They also hosted, in partnership with El Dorado County Office of Education and El Dorado Hills Town Center, a successful Stuff the Bus event where school supplies were collected outside of Target until an entire school bus was filled with necessary supplies and backpacks.

Margaret Lewis, the McKinney-Vento Services Coordinator for El Dorado County Office of Education spoke to why Hands4Hope's annual School Supply Drive is so needed: "In the 2022-23 school year, more than 900 children experienced homelessness while attending El Dorado County schools. Thirty percent of students in El Dorado County fall within 130-185% of the Federal poverty line in their families. The distribution of school supplies helps these children have a healthy and prepared start to the school year, and allows their families to redirect their resources toward other opportunities or needs."

This year's committee included 6 subcommittee chairs, 11 participants and 2 staff mentors, all led by a Hands4Hope alumni/college intern. In all, 51 volunteers served more than 450 hours to plan, collect, sort, and distribute school supplies. Their hard work paid off and they provided backpacks and supplies to a record 707 students this year! All in all, the youth-led committee collected, or shopped for using donated funds, 17,751 items including 725 backpacks, an estimated value of \$45,375 worth of supplies.

"The school supply drive is a super awesome and fun committee to work and volunteer with," said Vikram Singh, School Supply Drive & Distribution Volunteer Manager and Oak Ridge Hands4Hope Empower Club President. "We put in a lot of work, and it ended up being a great experience. I got to make a lot of friends while volunteering, and the work was very rewarding. Being able to see and interact with the children we were helping was lots of fun!"

We are grateful to the 17 local businesses and organizations who hosted Hands4Hope collection bins so donors had convenient locations to drop off backpacks and supplies. They include: El Dorado Hills Library, Datwyler Orthodontics, Friends of Folsom (FLB Entertainment Center), Folsom Historic District Association, Massage Heights, Lake Natoma Printing, Lyon Real Estate (Coach Ln.), Cameron Park Library, Lyon Real Estate (Missouri Flat Rd.), Placerville County Government Center, BT Consulting, El Dorado Disposal Waste Connections, and the Thompson Family of Dealerships.

The following organizations/businesses also contributed greatly through their in-house collection events: The Heritage Community, El Dorado Hills, led by Hands4Hope Adult Volunteer Gen Walk; Reliance Home Loans; Surf Soccer Club; led by Hands4Hope youth volunteer Evan Groves; Vintage Grace Church; The Hills Church; and The Widow's Support Group, El Dorado Hills.

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 or call (916) 294-7426



Members of the youth-led 2023 School Supply Drive committee worked for months on this impressive and successful effort.

During the 7-hour distribution event, Hands4Hope youth participants led students in grades K-12 through stations to “shop” for everything they need for school, from a new backpack to markers, pencils, calculators, notebooks, binders, and more.



Hands4Hope participants sorted and prepared 17,751 items for the distribution event.