

Crayons to Calculators school supply drive under way

Supplies help equip low-income students with needed supplies

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Crayons to Calculators

School supplies and backpacks can be dropped off year round at Impact on Education, 728 Front St., Suite A, Louisville, or through July 29 at various locations throughout Boulder County. Impact on Education also is accepting monetary donations and is seeking volunteers to help stuff the backpacks the week of Aug. 1.

For a complete list of drop-off locations, along with a list of the school supplies needed at the different grade levels, go to crayonstocalculators.org. For more information, email cheryl@impactoneducation.org.

Andrea Andrade, an incoming senior at Lafayette's Centaurus High School, is regular recipient of a backpack stuffed with school supplies as a student in Boulder County's I Have a Dream program.

"Everything you need, they try to put it in there," she said. "It's very useful. It helps that we don't have to buy them. Even in the middle of the year, they have extra supplies they can give us."

The Crayons to Calculators school supply drive is under way, seeking donations through the end of next week to give low-income students in the Boulder Valley and St. Vrain Valley school districts the opportunity to start the school year with new supplies. This year, the goal is to put together backpacks of school supplies for 8,000 students. Last year, it was 7,500 students.

"We're continuing with a depressed economy," said Cheryl Meyers, Crayons to Calculators program coordinator. "There are a lot of single parents, a lot of unemployed parents. There are a lot of people who need help."

Meyers said one need is for the expensive graphing calculators needed by high school students in higher level math classes. The organization is hoping to receive enough to donate some to teachers, who could then loan them to students. Another is for a wide variety of backpack styles and colors so there's not an obvious "free" pack.

"We want the kids to look like everybody else and blend in," Meyers said.

The school supply drive is a collaboration that includes Impact on Education, the Boulder Valley School District, the Education Foundation for the St. Vrain Valley, the I Have a Dream Foundation of Boulder Valley, the St. Vrain Valley School District, the Sister Carmen Community Center and United Way.

The idea is to combine the community's efforts and resources into one main school supply drive each year. Schools in the two districts provide lists of students whose families are low income.

Tracy Stegall, principal at Broomfield's Birch Elementary, said school supply lists can be daunting for families, especially those with more than one child.

"This program provides supplies that are necessary for high quality learning to families who need the help," she said.

The drive depends on both businesses, which compete to donate the most, and individual donations.

Molly Pieper and her sister Katie Lee, both of Louisville, began a few years to collect their families' spare change throughout the year, cashing it in to buy supplies for Crayons to Calculators. Their combined six children then go shopping.

"The kids enjoy doing this, as they get to pick out the supplies, colors, etc. for each backpack, knowing that these filled backpacks go to children who need them," Pieper said.

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