

## Agencies accepting back-to-school donations

By [Aida Mallard](#)

Published: Thursday, July 30, 2015 at 10:59 a.m.

With the end of summer, comes that all-too-familiar time that signals the beginning of the school year: Big retailers and grocery stores are overrun with backpacks and school supplies, and children, with their parents in tow, are now shopping for those items.

But sometimes, many families need a little help to make ends meet, so local organizations are working to fill that gap for students in elementary to high school by hosting back-to-school drives.

Those seeking donations this year include the Gainesville Police Department Duval Initiative, Children's Home Society, Partnership for Strong Families and Legacy of Hope Partnership of Porters.

GPD Officer Rob Koehler said the Duval Initiative's back-to-school drive will serve students who live in the Duval neighborhood and who have been identified by administrators with Alachua County Public Schools.

"We're hand-delivering the backpacks to the children," Koehler said. "This is a positive opportunity to see (police) officers and to let them (the children) know we're here to support them."

Jennifer Anchors, executive director of the Children's Home Society of Mid-Florida Division, said its back-to-school drive will help families served by Children's Home Society.

Anchors said the first day of school is already an emotional day filled with nerves and excitement without the additional stress of not being prepared.

"When they go to school without supplies, they shrink back and are embarrassed. We want them to be prepared and to have a successful year in school with what they need to succeed," Anchors said.

Jenn Petion, director of community and government relations at Partnership for Strong Families, said its biggest need right now is backpacks with school supplies for the children they serve.

Petion said Partnership is seeing an increase in the number of children who needs services. "In the last six months, we're seeing this trend statewide," Petion said. "It does put a strain on our resources for the back-to-school supplies."

Gigi Simmons, founder of Legacy of Hope Partnership of Porters or LOH-POP, a non-profit organization that serves children in underserved communities, said the fourth annual back-to-school drive will serve children of all ages, from Pre-K to high school.

"I think it's necessary for our children to have the necessary tools to have a successful school year, and working together, we can make it happen," Simmons said.

## **GPD**

Koehler said for Duval area children in grades 1-5, this may be a difficult school year because of the repurposing of Duval Elementary, which will become the Duval Early Learning Academy for children in Head Start, VPK and kindergarten.

Koehler said children in grades 1-5 zoned for Duval will now be attending school at Rawlings Elementary and far from their own neighborhood.

“It will be difficult for them and we want the kids to know they have the support of GPD and the community,” said Koehler, adding that GPD has already received many donations from businesses and other entities.

Items needed include backpacks filled with school supplies, children’s books and games.

Donations are being accepted at GPD at 545 NW Eighth Ave. by the Community Resource Team.

For more information, call 352-339-6185.

## **Home Society**

School supplies are needed for 326 children, including 56 in Alachua County served by CHS, a non-profit organization serving families through such programs as foster care case management, adoptions, abuse prevention, support for families and emergency shelter.

The service area covers Alachua, Baker, Bradford, Citrus, Columbia, Dixie, Gilchrist, Hamilton, Hernando, Lafayette, Lake, Levy, Madison, Marion, Sumter, Suwannee, Taylor, and Union counties.

Items needed include backpacks with USB flash drives, composition notebooks, pens, pencils, scissors, glue, graph paper, erasers, and other supplies.

Donations are being accepted from 8 a.m.- 5 p.m. Monday-Friday at Children’s Home Society at 711 NW First St.

For more information, call 352-334-0955.

## **Partnership**

Petion said the agency has received 250 requests for school supplies that include backpacks, pens, pencils, paper, markers, colored pencils, crayons, notebooks, binders, folders, scissors, glue and calculators.

Donations can be made in various ways. They can be dropped off at the office at 5950 NW First Place. Also, a check for \$25 can be mailed to 5950 NW First Place, Suite A, Gainesville, F. 32607 to the attention of Michelle Kidney, or donated via Amazon at [www.amazon.com/registry/wishlist/IDM4499MDX1S](http://www.amazon.com/registry/wishlist/IDM4499MDX1S).

“This back-to-school drive supports children in our care for abuse and neglect,” Petion said. “For these children, it is even more important to show up on the first day of school feeling they’re equipped like the rest of their peers.”

For more information, call 352-244-1500.

## **Porters**

Simmons said her goal is to provide 350 backpacks filled with school supplies and hygiene products.

Backpacks will be distributed on a first-come, first-served basis with children in the Porters community getting first pick. Pre-registration will be available Thursday and Friday for children living in Porters neighborhood by calling 352-505-0516.

The deadline for donations is Aug. 14 at the following locations:

\* Avera & Smith: 2814 SW 13th St.

\* Gainesville Chamber of Commerce: 300 E. University Ave.

\* Fire Station No. 1: 427 S. Main St.

\* Fire Station No. 5: 1244 NW 30th Ave.

\* Fire Station No. 8: 3223 NW 42nd Ave.

\* S&S Cleaners: 505 SW Third St.

\* Simmons Tax Services: 211 SW Fourth Ave., Suite 4.

Distribution will take place at the fourth annual Summer Block Party from 4-7 p.m. Aug. 22 at the Porters Community Center at 512 SW 2nd Terrace. The party will be sponsored by the law firm of Avera & Smith.

For more information, call 352-505-0516.

Copyright © 2015 Gainesville.com — All rights reserved. Restricted use only.