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Community Unites to Provide School Supplies for Kansas City Students

By Betty E.

Yes, United We Serve!

This initiative holds true for volunteerism in Wyandotte County, Kansas, where Kansas City is the county seat. Communities in Schools, the local Wyandotte County community group affiliated with the national organization, hosted a "Back to School Fair" for Wyandotte County students. Assistance from several organizations such as the Women's Chamber, Jr. League, the faith community, Wyandotte County RSVP, and many others displayed volunteerism at its best. They combined their talents, skills, professional experience and personal networks to make this an awesome event for all participants.



The event was held Saturday, August 1, 2009, at the National Guard Amory in Kansas City, Kansas. With this joint effort, more than 125 volunteers equipped 3,800 students with backpacks filled with school supplies. RSVP volunteers united with other volunteers to devote approximately 600 volunteer hours toward this needed service project. In conjunction with the "Back to School Fair," local exhibitors were on hand to showcase and promote their educational and community resources to all participants. Exhibitor booths ranged from after school tutoring programs to computer classes. Kansas City Public Library provided age-appropriate free library books for all. Also available were health screenings, information about community organizations, free Identi-Kid cards (an identification card for each child), entertainment, fun activities, and prizes.

Leading up to this massive event, volunteers donated many hours of service by sorting items and filling backpacks with the required school supplies for each grade level. Before the event, volunteers received their volunteer assignment, parking instructions, and other information about the event by mail. On the day of the event, volunteers helped set up tables, greet participants, and registered each family. They also distributed backpacks, bottled water, free library books, and meal tickets; served lunch to all participants; and helped clean up. The National Guard Amory soldiers and local police assisted with parking detail. Together they designed a seamless parking system for all participants. Although the day was filled with moment-to-moment activities, it was a well-planned and organized event.

The "Back to School Fair" supports an enormous need in Wyandotte County. Due to the increased number of unemployed residents in Wyandotte County, this fair served 1,737 families with needed school supplies. As of June 2009, Wyandotte County's unemployment rate soared to 9.8%. This unemployment rate is higher than in other counties in the Kansas City metropolitan area. Again, due to the economy, some Wyandotte County families were on site with their children at 5:00 A.M. to ensure they would receive a backpack filled with school supplies.

All in all, Wyandotte County's "Back to School Fair" is indicative of President Obama's "United We Serve" initiative. This event was successful through the tireless efforts of many volunteers who served students in the community by providing them with needed school supplies. Kudos go to Communities in Schools, National Guard Amory, local police, RSVP volunteers, and all other volunteer organizations that worked together to make this event a great success.

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