



OPERATION BACKPACK®

Cincinnati | Cleveland | Columbus

Organize a Drive How-To Guidebook



Operation Backpack® is 100% dependent on support from the community. Every year, Volunteers of America of Greater Ohio must fundraise, collect backpacks and school supplies, and coordinate the entire campaign with limited staff and resources dedicated to the project. Operation Backpack® simply could not exist without the generosity of local Ohio communities.

Below are guidelines and schedules to help you conduct a successful drive or support Operation Backpack® in other ways.

Thank you for your support!

What is Operation Backpack®?

Through Operation Backpack®, we collect and distribute brand new backpacks filled with school supplies to homeless and at-risk children throughout the Greater Cincinnati, Cleveland and Columbus areas. A filled backpack relieves struggling parents of a financial burden and provides a sense of normalcy to the otherwise chaotic lives of these children, helping them to look and feel more like their classmates.

Most importantly, a filled backpack allows these children to start the school year feeling prepared and confident, with the knowledge that their education is important and that someone believes in them.

How Can We Get Involved?

- Organize a drive and invite colleagues (or the entire building) to purchase and donate school supplies or backpacks, using our supply list as a guide. Download the supply lists at www.OperationBackpackGO.org (click on Organize a Drive).
- Donate directly to campaign. With your support, we can help families and children in need in your community. Donate at www.OperationBackpackGO.org.
- Spread the word about Operation Backpack® by inviting anyone who might be interested to support the cause. While corporate partners are some of our biggest supporters, we welcome individual donors, families and groups (i.e. churches, temples, civic and networking groups) to join the effort.
- Take photos to document your efforts. Post them on social media using #OperationBackpack and #VOAGOpacks, and send them to us (with permission from those in the photos) at OperationBackpack@voago.org.

TIPS TO ENSURE A SUCCESSFUL DRIVE AT WORK

Communicate! Ask your human resources department to help you raise awareness of Operation Backpack® through company newsletters, church newsletters, email, bulletin boards, and social media. Mention the drive during team meetings and ask colleagues to help too.

You can find printable fliers on our website, at www.OperationBackpackGO.org,

Enlist Support from Executives. Support from above is vital – it sets the tone and an expectation of community service. Make sure the company executives know about Operation Backpack® and view it as a great team-building opportunity and visible demonstration of corporate responsibility. Ask for their help in encouraging employees to participate. Ask them to make a generous gift on behalf of the company – perhaps your company may even want to become an official sponsor.

Encourage participation. Here are engagement activities other corporate partners have used:

- 50/50 raffles and bake sales to raise funds.
- Offer employees the option of ‘dress-down summer Fridays’ for a specific period of time (start the first week that you kick-off your workplace drive) if they pledge \$5/week until the drive ends.
- Have a weekly trivia question about Operation Backpack® and correct answers are eligible for a drawing.
- Encourage friendly competition on who can collect the most backpacks, forming teams from various departments, floors or workgroups.
- Enlist the support of your summer associates and interns asking them to promote the cause.
- Have your own “mini sort” – where the company purchases supplies and backpacks (complying with our supply lists) and during lunch one day, employees are invited to prepare fill the backpacks. Offer a “family day”, inviting employees to go shopping for supplies and backpacks which they then bring in and sort the supplies into backpacks, being sure to label them. The children (or adults) can make cards to accompany the backpacks, wishing the children receiving them a great school year.

Next Steps?

- Let us know if you plan on organizing a drive at work, adopting a product, becoming a sponsor, or if you have a completely new idea to help the cause.
- Decide when you will begin. You can start your drive before the actual Operation Backpack® campaign dates, but we ask that all donations be submitted by August 8.
- Set up collection boxes in well-trafficked areas and places posters instructing your colleagues on how to help. You can download printable fliers on our website, www.OperationBackpackGO.org (click on Organize a Drive).
- Make sure receptionists, anyone located near a collection bin or others who may be asked about the drive, have basic information about the drive and who to contact for questions.
- If you are donating filled backpacks, make sure you let everyone know they must use the supply lists provided. Once you are done collecting donations, complete the group reporting form (included in this package or downloadable from www.OperationBackpackGO.org).

FAQs

How Do I Describe Operation Backpack® to My Team?

Operation Backpack® is a back-to-school drive that collects and distributes new backpacks full of school supplies to thousands of homeless and at-risk children throughout the Greater Cincinnati, Cleveland and Columbus areas. A filled backpack relieves struggling parents of a financial burden and provides a sense of normalcy to the otherwise chaotic lives of these children, helping them to look and feel more like their classmates.

One of the most devastating consequences of family homelessness is the impact it has on a child's education. The stigma of being homeless weighs heavily on these children – as a result, less than 25% graduate from high school.

By participating a collection drive, you are showing your commitment to help the most vulnerable in your community. When you donate a filled backpack, you're making sure these children will start the school year feeling prepared and confident, with the knowledge that their education is important and that someone believes in them.

Who Benefits from Operation Backpack®?

The backpacks and school supplies collected are used in a number of ways. All of the families and children in our programs are provided a backpack and school supplies. We also work with partner agencies and school districts in the Greater Cincinnati, Cleveland and Columbus areas to ensure as many children as possible get the tools they need to start the school year off on the right foot.

Last year we were able to give backpacks to over 2,000 children across Ohio – but, there are still many more children in need who could still benefit from Operation Backpack®.

What is Unique About Operation Backpack®?

- Operation Backpack® puts the backpacks in the children's hands *before* they go to school so on day one, they look and feel more like their classmates and less like a “shelter or homeless kid.”
- Nothing is used or junky. These children almost never have new things – clothing is second hand, toys and books are scarce, food is what parents can afford on a strictly limited budget. But all the supplies are new, and the backpacks are good quality, and vary in color and design so they cannot be identified as “shelter backpacks”.
- Before we distribute backpacks to other organizations and schools, we first give backpacks to children living in shelters, or who are part of a program aimed at preventing homelessness.

Sample Social Media Posts

Facebook:

Join me and Volunteers of America of Greater Ohio to help homeless and at-risk kids go back to school with confidence #OperationBackpack <http://bit.ly/1WMVvbf>

Homeless children are more likely to repeat a grade compared to other children. Help homeless children in Ohio go to school prepared through Operation Backpack® <http://bit.ly/1WMVvbf>

Many homeless children won't have the necessary supplies when starting school, putting them at a disadvantage. Help prepare these kids to succeed: <http://bit.ly/1WMVvbf>

The first day of school can be tough for any kid, but it's even worse for one who is homeless. You can help change this: <http://bit.ly/1WMVvbf>

Twitter:

Proud to join @VOAGO to prepare #homeless kids heading back to school <http://bit.ly/1WMVvbf> #OperationBackpack

Help @VOAGO give #backpacks & school supplies to #homeless kids <http://bit.ly/1WMVvbf>

You can help a homeless child in your #community <http://bit.ly/1WMVvbf> #OperationBackpack #VOAGOpacks

#Education is key to breaking cycle of family #homelessness <http://bit.ly/1WMVvbf> #OperationBackpack #VOAGOpacks

Give confidence to a #homeless child for their 1st day of school #OperationBackpack <http://bit.ly/1WMVvbf>

Sample Copy (Modify the below sample text to use in your newsletter, email blasts, etc.)

Give Confidence to Homeless and At-Risk Children in Ohio by Supporting Operation Backpack® 2017!

One of the most devastating consequences of homelessness is the impact it has on a child's education. Thousands of children live with their families who struggle with homelessness and most will return to school without the school supplies they need, looking and feeling different from their classmates.

But you can help change that.

For ten years, Operation Backpack® has been providing Ohio's most vulnerable children with new backpacks brimming with school supplies in time for the first day of school. With your help, these kids will start school full of confidence, looking and feeling like their classmates and not like a child in need.

Volunteers of America of Greater Ohio's goal this year is to collect 2,500 backpacks. Last year, (*NAME OF COMPANY*) participated in Operation Backpack® and together we collected and donated [#] backpacks [*or boxes of supplies or funds*]. This year, let's make it [#]!

For more information, or to donate funds, (*CALL INTERNAL CONTACT*) or look for collection boxes (*LOCATION*).

To learn more about Volunteers of America of Greater Ohio or Operation Backpack® visit www.OperationBackpackGO.org.

School Supply List



Cincinnati | Cleveland | Columbus

Give confidence to a child in need.

Every new backpack filled with supplies you donate helps at-risk kids succeed in school. Because of you, they will no longer have to worry if they will have the tools needed for class – they can focus on their studies, confident and ready to learn.

How you can help:

1. Purchase a new backpack and school supplies using the list below.
2. Checkmark the below supplies that are in the bag. *(Please leave missing items blank)*
3. Fill out your contact information and place this form inside your backpack.
4. Deliver the backpack to a drop location near you. *(Visit www.OperationBackpackGO.org)*
5. Involve others by using **#OperationBackpack** and **#VOAGOPacks** for your social media posts.

Supply List

**Additional items for High School students.*

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Spiral notebook (1) | <input type="checkbox"/> Crayola crayons, 24-count (1) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Filler paper (1) | <input type="checkbox"/> Pencils, #2 (4) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Elmer's glue sticks (2) | <input type="checkbox"/> Pencil sharpener (1) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pencil box or pouch (1) | <input type="checkbox"/> Crayola washable markers, 8-count (1) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Large eraser (1) | <input type="checkbox"/> Dictionary, paperback (1)* |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Ruler | <input type="checkbox"/> Protractor (1)* |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Folders, 2-pocket (3) | <input type="checkbox"/> Highlighter (1)* |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Binder, 3-ring (1) | <input type="checkbox"/> Pens, ball-point (4)* |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Scissors (1) | <input type="checkbox"/> Subject dividers, 5-tab (1)* |

Please fill-out your information below to receive updates on how your support helps people in need.

Name: _____

Company/Organization: _____

Address: _____

City/State/Zip: _____

Email: _____

**Thank you for
your support!**