

## Supply collection opens for Back 2 School Alliance

Julia Evelsizer [jevelsizer@pantagraph.com](mailto:jevelsizer@pantagraph.com) 3 hrs ago 0



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In this July 2015 file photo, Back 2 School Alliance volunteers Hayley Kintner, left, and Angela T both second-grade teachers at Glenn Elementary School, Normal, accept a donated backpack from Tiffany Rollins and her daughter, Addyson, at Walmart in Normal.

**BLOOMINGTON** — Donation boxes are open and ready to be filled with school supplies at numerous Bloomington-Normal locations for the annual Back 2 School Party giveaway for students in need.

“It’s great to see the excitement on kids faces seeing those brand new materials,” said general organizer Jan Meadows of the Back 2 School Alliance. “How many of us remember opening that brand new box of pointed crayons with that great smell? Everyone deserves to have that.”

Donation boxes are at several businesses, churches and social service and government agencies, including Afni, both Walmarts, YWCA McLean County, Office Depot, McLean County Museum of History and the unit offices of Normal-based McLean County Unit 5 and Bloomington District 87.

Requested items for donation include backpacks; 1.5- or 2-inch zippered binders; divider tabs; two-

pocket folders; lined index cards; rulers; wide-ruled paper; wide-ruled spiral notebooks; 1.5-inch, three-ring binders; pencils, pens, erasers; glue sticks, colored pencils, markers, crayons, highlighters and scissors.

“Two things we always run short on are markers and composition notebooks,” said Meadows.

Thanks to a \$2,000 grant from the Illinois Prairie Foundation, the group is able to buy large backpacks suitable for high school students for the first time. The high school backpacks will be handed out by counselors at the beginning of the school year.

Volunteers will be at the doors of the Normal Walmart collecting supplies from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. Saturday, 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Sunday and from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. July 16.

For a full list of supplies, drop-off locations or ways to donate money, visit [back2schoolalliance.org](http://back2schoolalliance.org).

Back 2 School Alliance will package the donated items in more than 2,000 backpacks and give them to low-income students at a party from 1 to 5 p.m. Aug. 9 at U.S. Cellular Coliseum in Bloomington.

The event is open to kindergarten to eighth-grade students registered at District 87 and Unit 5 for 2016-17 who qualify for free or reduced lunch and have received immunizations. Families must contact their school for a party invitation.

“At the party we also have a huge resource fair with all sorts of opportunities for families. This year we’ll have booths with Realtors discussing low-income housing and Heartland Community College will talk about GED classes,” said Meadows.

Games, face painting and other activities will be available for children while waiting in line for backpacks.

“We aren’t providing parents with everything,” said Meadows. “Some teachers require students to bring boxes of Kleenex or hand sanitizer and sometimes students need new shoes for gym. Families will have to come up with those items but we’ve helped shoulder the burden.”

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