

Back-to-School

Post in Florida donates hundreds of backpacks

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Along the Gulf Coast of Florida, VFW Post 9236 in Hernando Beach celebrated the back-to-school spirit by donating more than 850 backpacks to its community this summer.

The Post, about 52 miles west of Tampa, Florida, spread the wealth of backpacks across several avenues to help a wide variety of families in need by providing them with something as essential as a backpack for school.

"Realizing that so many families are currently struggling to provide essentials, it means the world to me to be able to facilitate these donations to Hernando County families," VFW Post 9236 Commander Jason Spencer said. "Every little but helps, and we're thrilled to help."

They donated 150 backpacks to a local high school teacher and VFW Post 9236 Auxiliary member, 200 to the Hernando County Sheriff's Office for their annual giveaway, as well as 500 toward a Florida-based supermarket chain's annual "Stuff the Bus" event.

"They stuff school buses at each of their stores," VFW Post 9236 Auxiliary President Lisa Spencer said of Publix, an employee-owned supermarket chain headquartered in Lakeland, Fla. "They were extremely grateful to have backpacks for the supplies to be put in."

Every Fall season for the past five years, the Post and its Auxiliary also have collected supplies to fill backpacks for homeless veterans. They host a drive to collect socks, gloves, beanie hats, personal hygiene products, shelf stable snacks, hand warmers, can openers and other comfort items. Each backpack receives a special blanket either sewn or crocheted by the Auxiliary.

"We collect items through the Fall months and stuff and distribute the backpacks in early December," Spencer said. "We love helping our veterans and doing community service. That's what the VFW is all about."

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