

# PRESS RELEASE



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## **Fairfax County Office of Public Private Partnerships, FCPS and Partners Collect 20,000 Backpacks for Fairfax County Kids**

*Donations up 17% from 2011*

*Nearly 50% of the children on free and reduced lunch served*

**Fairfax, VA** (September 20, 2011) – Fairfax County Office of Public Private Partnerships (OP<sup>3</sup>), as part of a 20 member collaborative that included FCPS, Apple Federal Credit Union and Kids R First, announced today that the annual “Collect for Kids” backpack drive resulted in nearly 20,000 backpacks collected for Fairfax County students. Backpacks, school supplies and donations were collected through late August and distributed through local nonprofits to school children in need. This year more than 40,000 children have been identified as deserving of free and reduced priced meals, and this drive was able to serve nearly 50% of those children.

“This is a true collaborative of nonprofit and for-profit groups and Fairfax County citizens. It’s a model for success. The immediate benefit is that kids now can come to school ready to learn,” commented Patricia Stevens, Executive Director of the Fairfax County office of Public Private Partnerships. This collaborative, which marked its second-year, sought to bring together several separate efforts to achieve synergy and increase the reach into the schools. As a result, many of the nonprofits reported significant upticks in donations, especially of the supplies needed for middle and high schools students. Our Daily Bread, for example, stated that their cash donations were up 300% and they received \$3,000 worth of scientific calculators alone.

According to statistics, Fairfax County, despite its relative wealth, has a significant number of children in need. Dr. Jack Dale, Superintendent of Schools, said, “This partnership is amazing. The number of children served rises every year, as does the need for help. Twenty-six percent doesn’t seem like a large number, but that represents more than the entire enrollment in the DC school system. This partnership fills a true need.”

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Apple Federal Credit Union, a main corporate partner, collected backpacks at their branches and filled almost 1,000 packs. They also created a unique Facebook campaign that attracted \$1,100 in donations, which they matched to double the buying power.

This collaborative is looking ahead to 2013 when it hopes the public will help them meet 100% of the need for backpacks. Sally Donnelly, a reading specialist at Westgate Elementary School, summed it up best as she watched a child with a new backpack, “The backpack itself is a kind of uniform. This student clearly felt important, so important that he is taking his backpack wherever he goes, even back to school to hang and watch a movie. Wearing it gave him that feeling that he is cool. And when we feel cool, we feel we belong, and then we can learn.”

## **About Fairfax County OP3:**

Fairfax County OP3 is the Office of Public Private Partnerships for Fairfax County, Virginia. OP3 develops partnerships between the business community and local community organizations that address critical needs in Fairfax County. OP<sup>3</sup> creates and develops public private partnerships to stimulate positive change in the community and encourages civic involvement and responsibility. One of the goals of OP<sup>3</sup> is to bring together resources between the public and private sectors to effectively transform the quality of life in the community. Visit [www.fairfaxcountypartnerships.org](http://www.fairfaxcountypartnerships.org) for more information on how to become engaged in the community.