

# Buckner enables parents to provide school supplies for their children

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HOUSTON—When the door opened in a small portable building at the Buckner Family Hope Center at Aldine in Houston, a soothing voice beckoned a mother and her three children inside.

“Come on in,” said a volunteer standing next to the doorframe. And with that, a smile emerged from shy faces. The family knew they were welcome.



Shawna Roy (center), director of the Buckner Family Hope Center at Aldine in Houston, worked with sponsors and volunteers at a back-to-school event. (Photo / John Hall / Buckner)The Hope Center provided than 300 children backpacks full of school supplies Aug. 12, one of a series of Buckner back-to-school events across the state meant to help those same smiles appear on the first day of school.

“For many people in our community, education may not be the most important thing,” said Shawna Roy, director of the Hope Center at Aldine. “When you find out why that is, you usually find it’s because they didn’t have the support they needed. So, we’re not only offering school supplies;

we're offering tutoring and after-school programs. We tell each child when we give them a backpack that we expect good grades."

Many of the back-to-school events included providing school uniforms, haircuts, a variety of services offered through other organizations and new shoes donated through Buckner Shoes for Orphan Souls. Lines of people stretched around some of the facilities, and families eagerly sought to prepare their children for the upcoming school year.

Each recipient of backpacks at the Hope Center at Aldine earned the school supplies for their children by participating in classes and volunteering in programs that benefit others.

"We are trying to make people know we are a family," Roy said. "We are not a handout. We encourage people to be part of their solution. It is a really big moment when a parent can say, 'Here are your school supplies that Mommy earned.'"

For Araceli Ramos, the assistance makes an incredible difference. She is saving hundreds of dollars in an already stretched budget by picking up school supplies for her five children at the Hope Center.



Children will be able to begin the school year with the supplies they need, thanks in large part to Buckner Family

Hope Centers. (Photo / John Hall / Buckner) “It’s a relief,” she said. “There’s seven of us. Only my husband works in construction. It’s a lot of help. Finding people who will help is a blessing.”

Sory Mingo, who received backpacks for her two school-aged children shortly after Ramos, expressed gratitude for the school supplies.

“It means a lot. Imagine having four children, and only my husband works. I would be spending \$200 to \$300. I’m saving that.”

Cheryl Williams, director of the Buckner Family Hope Center at Wynnewood in Dallas, said events like the Dallas Back-to-School Bash energize families for the beginning of the academic year. Families are equipped for school, and students are excited to learn.

“I like the bash, because it’s really a pep rally,” she said. “It’s a jump-start for parents. Kids’ feet grow in the summer, so they have to get new shoes—and clothes and supplies. That’s a lot for parents. The Back-to-School Bash just takes a little bit of the weight off of them.”

Hope Centers across Texas continue to see the fruits of the hard work of the students they serve. Many of them become the first high school and college graduates in their families.

“These students are setting the tone and creating a shift in their family dynamic,” Roy said. “It all starts with a backpack.”