

# Help available for kids going back to school

[Katherine Lymn](#), USA TODAY NETWORK-Wisconsin 12:02 p.m. CDT August 3, 2016

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There's still a month of summer, but it's not too soon to ask — is everyone ready for school?

Community groups say they've already heard from plenty of families looking to prepare for school with a little extra help by way of free backpacks, supplies, clothes and shoes. And there's still time.

"I've been receiving referrals now since middle

of June," said Penny Jane Strauss, who coordinate's Outagamie County's backpack program for kids. County social workers who identify kids needing supplies can get them from Strauss, who typically gives out 1,000 to 1,200 backpacks a year.

The Post-Crescent's annual [Backpacks for Kids program](#) provides many of the supplies for the cause.

Lisa Smith, who manages the Fox Cities United Way's 2-1-1 call resource center, said in July, August and September last year, 78 people in Outagamie County or the Neenah-Menasha area called or inquired online about free or low-cost school supplies, children's clothing or other school-related needs.

Close to 900 kids have appointments to shop for a new outfit for the first day of school at the Community Clothes Closet this month, executive director Diane MacDonald said.

Tim Gantz, director of pupil services at the Neenah Joint School District, said students who don't have all their supplies or a new set of shoes can have more anxiety on top of an already big day.

"Whether good or bad, there's a lot of judgment going on from student-to-student" on the first day of school, he said. Being prepared means one less thing to think about.



*(Photo: Danny Damiani/USA TODAY NETWORK-Wisconsin)*

"You've got a new backpack, maybe a new set of sneakers, all your supplies," he said. "You're at that equal level with everybody else right off the bat in terms of having what you need."

Here's some places to start getting ready:

### **Back-to-school fair**

**What:** [Party in the Park](#), an outreach fair from local churches with clothing, haircuts, food and school supplies

**When:** 10 a.m. to 3 p.m., Aug. 27

**Where:** Pierce Park, Appleton

### **Backpacks and supplies**

To get a backpack through a county, Strauss recommends a family works with a county worker they're already connected with. If they don't already know a county worker, they can contact her at volunteer services (920-832-5515).

Appleton families can also reach out to their school. School district staff members donate supplies at an event right before the beginning of the school year.

"It's really important that they have the backpack on the first day and step out on the right foot, and hopefully stay on track," said Kimm Smith, assistant to the superintendent.

### **Clothes and shoes**

**What:** Community Clothes Closet's Cool for School program. The Cool for School program is already at capacity, but parents and students in need can still access clothes during the agency's regular client hours (with a referral from a social service agency).

**When:** Client hours are 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. Monday, Tuesday and Thursday; 6 to 8 p.m. Monday and Wednesday

**Where:** 1465-B Opportunity Way, Menasha

**More information:** 920-731-7834. Call United Way's 2-1-1 for more on local resources for clothing, food and supplies.

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### Help with 'Backpacks for Kids'

To help kids get backpacks full of school supplies, give to The Post-Crescent's "Backpacks for Kids" fund with the Community Foundation for the Fox Valley Region. Donations help students in Outagamie, Winnebago, Calumet and Waupaca counties. Give online at [donor.cffoxvalley.org/pcbbackpacks](https://donor.cffoxvalley.org/pcbbackpacks) or by mailing a check to the Community Foundation: 4455 W. Lawrence St., Appleton, WI, 54914.