Local non-profit helps prepare low income students for school

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SEYMOUR — The start of the school year is just around the corner, which means it's time to shop for school supplies.

According to the National Retail Federation, families could spend a record amount of money this year. Families with children in elementary
school through high school plan to spend nearly $700 on supplies - that's up just under 2% from last year. Families with college students are expected to spend nearly $1,000, which is up nearly 3.7%.

The National Retail Federation reported all together spending for back to school and back to college shoppers could hit almost $81 billion this year.

For some families, this can create a stressful time as they cross items off their child's growing school supplies list while trying to make ends meet. One local non-profit is helping out families in a tough spot with their back to school shopping.

Community 2000 is a program of Valley Packaging Industries funded in part by the United Way Fox Cities.

"Our program serves low income families in the Seymour Shicton school district so the rural areas of Outagamie County," said Juli Meulemans, the program coordinator.

Pamela Carew was shopping at Community 2000 with her daughter. She said the non-profit has impacted her and her family through the years.

"It's been an ongoing thing where they help me whenever I need it," said Carew.

She was able to get backpacks filled with school supplies, shoes, and clothing for all her children for free.

"Even though it may not be new, it's new for us, so I mean, it's helped a lot," said Carew.
Meulemans said they work with the schools in May to get the lists of supplies and start getting everything together.

"Families struggle. It's not just school supplies that's expensive. They need shoes for gym that have to stay at school. They need shoes that they can wear in the winter time and a summer shoe. They also need to pay for lunch tickets and school fees and any sort of sporting event. It adds up," added Meulemans.

She said they help nearly one hundred students and some adults with back to school shopping.

Carew said she donates to Community 2000 when she can. She brings items her children outgrow or things they don't use to the non-profit in hopes of helping another family in a tough spot.

If you are interested in getting involved with Community 2000 or are looking for assistance, you can call the non-profit at 920-833-0277 or visit its website here.