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United Way of Greater Toledo
Serving Lucas, Wood,
& Ottawa counties

United Way Helps Students Prepare for School, In-Person or Virtual

[July 29, 2020, TOLEDO, OH] – United Way of Greater Toledo (UWGT) has quickly changed its back to school season logistics, now distributing thousands of classroom supply kits, as well as leveraging corporate dollars to purchase Google Chromebooks, software and hotspots for at-home learning.

“United Way has completely shifted its operations because of COVID-19. Not only have we re-routed our day-to-day work, we are striving to safely execute and re-scale our largest community events, without losing their impact,” said Wendy Pestrue, president & CEO of UWGT.

This is in reference to the nonprofit’s annual *Kickoff to Caring*, which gathers more than 1,000 volunteers to pack 5,000 backpacks full of supplies for students in need across Lucas, Wood and Ottawa County.

“Unfortunately, we cannot host a large event like *Kickoff to Caring* this year. That being said – the needs of students are still very real, so we must respond. Thanks to Dana Incorporated and Lucas County Job & Family Services, we are able to do just that,” she said.

After consulting with several community-based organizations and local school districts, UWGT has already packed, and will distribute, 4,000 school supply kits to Toledo Public Schools (TPS), Salvation Army, Kinship Navigator Program (Area Office on Aging), Lucas County Foster Care and Sylvania Area Family Services. With learning predominately taking place in an online environment this year, there was an expressed need for at-home classroom materials such as pencils, pens, glue sticks, notebooks and markers.

“Whether kids are physically in the classroom or learning virtually, they need supplies. With school operations being logistically fluid, we wanted to ensure that, whatever opportunity we helped make possible, the academic needs of students took center stage,” said Pestrue.

UWGT’s Wood County office will still distribute 336 backpacks full of supplies to their Salvation Army office for curbside pickup. Simply dial two, one, one to reserve a bag. You must be a Wood County resident to qualify.

UWGT’s Ottawa County office plans to distribute 312 backpacks full of supplies to their Salvation Army office as well. Parents can pick up an application for a bag at The Sutton Center, (1854 E. Perry St., Port Clinton, OH). You must be an Ottawa County resident to qualify.

In addition to these items, in early June, UWGT’s Digital Strategy Committee leveraged a \$25,000 gift from the Accenture Detroit office. The dollars specifically went to TPS for the purchase of Google Chromebooks and internet hotspots. Through this partnership, TPS gained “experience software,” improving digital communications between educators and students.

The Digital Strategy Committee was formed in 2018 and is comprised of Chief Information Officers, Data Scientists and Information Technology professionals from the corporate, healthcare and academic sectors, who help guide UWGT’s data collection strategies and best practices.

“When using words like ‘predictive modeling’ or ‘data collection,’ I get a lot of curious looks. If we, as a nonprofit, seek to tackle the root of community issues, we have to know where services are most needed, who is engaging in these services and, most importantly, asking if individuals find those services helpful.”

VISUAL OPPORTUNITY: TPS will be gathering 2,250 school supply kits (188 boxes) on Friday, July 31 at 9:00 a.m. at UWGT’s downtown office, (424 Jackson St., Toledo, OH 43604).

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