

Pack2School 2009 Was a Huge Success!

Pack2School (formerly known as Back to School) began 39 years ago to provide assistance to ELTC students struggling to buy school supplies for their children. The program was very well-received and over the years has expanded to include other low-income families in Larimer County. We have provided school supplies to thousands of our local kids since the program began, supporting their success in school by giving them the tools they need. This year we provided school supplies to nearly 1,000 low-income students. **2009 was our biggest year ever!**

There are other school supply programs in our community, yet ours remains unique due to three key aspects:

1. We continue to allow each child to pick out or "shop" for his or her preferred styles and colors of supplies. This ability to choose makes a positive impact on a child's self-esteem.
2. Families still pay just \$5 per backpack, which does nothing to cover the cost of the supplies valued at over \$50, but works to instill a sense of ownership and accountability in each child.
3. Our distribution in early August allows each child to show up at school on the first day, complete with brand new school supplies just like the other kids. This alleviates the embarrassment or stigma of having to ask a teacher or school administrator for supplies due to financial hardship.

These three aspects promote the values and culture at ELTC, and are what we continue to adhere to in serving our adult population as well.

Pack2School could not operate nearly as efficiently without the many volunteers who give generously of their time. The **Kiwanis Golden K** has been a long time supporter. Their report from this year's activity touches the heart of our program:

"Comments about the need were common. One lady explained the reason she needed help this year for the first time. Her wages were garnished for \$500 to pay for outstanding medical bills. She was optimistic that she would be able to buy supplies next year. Another lady with five kids said she is homeless. Her husband lost his job and was denied unemployment. They are staying with the lady's sister now, but the sister is losing her home at the end of the month. School supplies for five kids amounted to a lot of money she obviously didn't have right now. 'Finances are very hard right now, this is a big help,' stated another mom who was participating for the first time. 'It's a great program for people with low income, and for the community,' said a father."

Nicolle Gregg of A-Train Marketing Communications volunteered at this year's Pack2School for the first time. There were **six volunteers from A-Train** helping that day. She facilitated operations on the first day by assisting each participants complete the necessary paper work before entering the building for registration. It was especially important on day one, when over 600 children came through for their supplies.

Nicolle was impressed with the program's organization and efficiency. She especially appreciated support provided by the ELTC staff. Questions were answered quickly and problems resolved rapidly. She believes our approach of letting each child select their own supplies and fill their own backpack is a real plus for the kids. It's a unique benefit provided by ELTC and gives each child a sense of ownership. The minimal donation also mitigates an association with charity. She says: "It was a thoroughly wonderful and delightful experience. Interaction with the children and their parents was great. I definitely plan to participate again next year. "

