

Drive for Supplies – Brief Overview

“One Man's Junk is Another Man's Treasure.” If ever there was truth in a statement, then this statement applies to the *Drive for Supplies* program!

The *Drive for Supplies*, program not only teaches students the importance of recycling and reducing landfill waste, but also teaches them that they can have a direct impact on communities by donating their reusable school supplies to local, national, and international schools and organizations.



So, how did this all begin? In 1999, Kevin and Louise Newcomer, founders of Learn Shop, Inc., first conceived *Drive for Supplies* when Kosovo refugees, temporarily housed at Fort Dix, New Jersey, needed school supplies. At that time, several Montgomery County Public Schools (MPCS) collected gently used school supplies (pens, pencils, crayons, notepaper, glue, rulers, binders, notebooks, etc.) to donate. Since its inception, the program has expanded to include many of the MCPS schools and local businesses. The collected supplies are now distributed to assist economically depressed children in our county, surrounding counties, and needy children in several foreign countries through international aid organizations. In addition, nonprofit agencies that aid low-income students and families also receive materials. One student volunteer said, “*This program is absolutely amazing. It requires so little but it does so much for the people who receive the supplies.*”



The *Drive for Supplies* project serves many functions. First, the project collects used, but still usable school supplies that are donated to disadvantaged children. Secondly, this is a great opportunity to promote community action. Individual families and businesses can also participate by donating their usable supplies and student volunteers who sort the materials learn valuable lessons while earning student service-learning hours. During these tough economic times, collecting used supplies at the end of the school year also saves the school system money by reducing disposal costs. And, at any time, by reducing what students normally would trash, they are also reducing waste in our community landfills. Another student volunteer reflected, “*I learned that many students, including myself, usually throw away good supplies which other students can use.*”

This project is a great hands-on service-learning project for schools. It takes basically no money to run and the results are amazing. One student volunteer who worked in the program for several years had this to say about her experience: “*Serving as a volunteer sorter for Drive for Supplies was an incredibly enriching experience.*

Throughout the week, we sorted through boxes of donated school supplies. During this time, I was constantly reminded of the three R's – reducing, reusing, and recycling. By simply throwing school supplies into a box, thousands of students allowed their notebooks, pens, art supplies, and countless other items to be reused. I was also reminded that our society is extremely wasteful, throwing away good supplies simply because they can afford to buy new ones each year. By sorting through the donated materials, I learned how many supplies are usually thrown out every year. These usable school supplies were saved from landfills and many pounds of used paper that we took out of binders were sent to be recycled.



I learned that helping people does not require a lot of money or fanfare and that a few people can really make a difference. What is needed to help is a good heart, a strong will, and the ability to reach out your hand and say, “I want to help!” and then, do something about it.

Because of this program, many students who would not have started the school year with the basic school supplies will be able to have the same tools as their classmates. I think that this is the most important message, that people can help and that there will always be those less advantaged, but you can never stop working to help them.”

Did you know that in the United States, children under 18 years represent 23 percent of the but they comprise 33 percent of all people in poverty? Among all children, 44 percent live in low-families and approximately one in every five (22 percent) live in poor families. Young children years appear to be particularly vulnerable, with 48 percent living in low-income and 25 percent families. (*National Center for Children in Poverty NCCP, publication 2013*)



population,
income
under age 6
living in poor

The United States has highest child poverty rate of any industrialized nation. One in four children in the US live in poverty with 194 million children receiving free or reduced price lunch (*PovertyProgram.com*)

“*I learned that it is very rewarding to do something that helps others. I realize now that I am really fortunate to have all that I have.*” (*Student volunteer quote*)



With the expansion of this service-learning project, schools supplies could be collected and channeled to those needy children. With the help of non-profit organizations, needed supplies could also be shipped to children around the world. It takes so little to make a big difference.

Please consider conducting reusable supplies drive at your school. Just follow these simple steps!

You can conduct a “Drive for Supplies” in your school or community!

Simple Overview:

Collection

- Set the dates you want to conduct a *Drive for Supplies* at your school. (Try to coordinate the program with at least one other school so you can swap supplies. You might also collaborate with community non-profit groups that benefit children.)
- The *Drive for Supplies* coordinator should collaborate with the science teachers, social studies teachers, student service-learning coordinator, student councils group, etc., to emphasize the socio-economic, environmental, and service learning aspects of this project.
- Collect boxes in which students can put their donations. Ask the local grocery stores, and other business for large boxes. You may also wish to contact local business and see if they have anything to donate (many are going paperless and have great, clean binders)!
- Schedule a day (or days) for each class, team, or grade level to clean out their lockers, backpacks, and desks (elementary, middle and high schools).
- Advertise this collection/recycling project to all students, families, and community businesses.
- Assign students to be in the halls collecting the supplies. Ask businesses if you can set out boxes in their stores for collections. (You often get new donations.)
- Ask students to tear out and recycle used pages of composition and spiral notebooks.
- Assign students to stand by both recycling and trash cans to ensure that no usable supplies are being thrown away and that recycling items are not going into trash containers.
- Filled boxes from classes or halls should be delivered to a designated “processing site.”



Processing Site

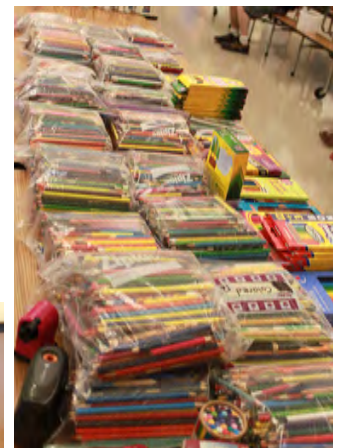


- Check that supplies are in usable condition.
- Check that all used pages in composition/spiral notebooks have been torn out. (Please check carefully–this is extremely important). Completely cross out student names or cover them with labels. (You can probably get donated labels – especially the old “pin-fed” type.)
- Sort items into similar categories and box accordingly. You may wish to collect data by weighing supplies. Weighing supplies is a constant rather than counting supplies, for example, 13 pounds of scissors as opposed to 234 pairs of scissors of varying sizes.
- Label the contents on the outside of the boxes. (Take pictures – a picture is worth a thousand words!)
- *Suggestion: Have a separate clothing drive. Contact a local clothing closet in your area for specific donation information. That saves the expense/time of laundering donated clothing.*
- If applicable, give Student Service-Learning (SSL) credit forms to students who are collecting, sorting, boxing, and labeling supplies. For more information about student service learning, go to <http://www.goodcharacter.com/SERVICE/webresources.html>

Distribution



- **IMPORTANT** – Try to set a date where other schools, organizations or individual families can come to donate and pick up the sorted supplies or have a location in your school/community where organizations and families can drop off or pick up supplies at a specific time of year or throughout the year.



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