



Renfrew County Child Poverty Action Network

c/o The Phoenix Centre for Children and Families
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My name is Lyn Smith and I am the Coordinator for Renfrew County Child Poverty Action Network (CPAN). I am writing to you regarding our **Backpack Plus Program**. I have included a summary of the program for your information.

CPAN has been helping low income children with Backpack Plus for over four years. Our network has built a very successful program, which is delivered in a dignified and respectful manner to families who are having financial stress. Backpack Plus assists children by giving each child in need a backpack, school supplies and shoes. These children would otherwise have to return to school unprepared to learn, and would feel excluded.

Over the years our program has grown, this past school year (2008-09) we were able to help 1,526 children throughout Renfrew County. From the feedback received from parents we know that this program makes a positive change in the lives of many children. We have been told that bullying has been reduced, self esteem has increased, and the overall feeling of inclusion has helped to decrease the anxiety that many low income children face. Unfortunately, our funding is no longer available and we have to find new ways to run the program.

CPAN is determined to help these children in need, who without our assistance will have to return to school unprepared to learn, and who will feel socially excluded. We know that children who are included do much better at school and are more likely to succeed, graduate and transition to post secondary education. This year we estimate that there will be a need of between 1500 to 2000 children who will need backpacks, supplies, and shoes.

Our Request

Is that all members of the Renfrew County community rally to help us by donating, or letting others know about the need (this could be at your place of work, union, service club, etc.).

Some retailers have been contacted and have agreed to set-up collection boxes, collect cash at check-outs, and even HBC rewards points. There is also the opportunity to donate to our Community Rewards card at www.hbc.com/hbc rewards go to "Community Program" (left box) and then click on "donate to existing community," fill in boxes Province and Pembroke and we will pop up!

We need:

New backpacks (all sizes); school supplies, such as packages of paper, pens, pencils, erasers, binders, markers, highlighters, calculators, geometry sets, etc., and/or the funding to purchase these items. We also need funding for the shoe portion of the program; the average cost is \$30 per pair. Tax receipts can be given for donations of \$10 or more (on request). **We are also in need of volunteers** to collect, fill, and redistribute the backpacks in the following areas: Arnprior, Barry's Bay, Beachburg, Cobden, Deep River, Eganville, Golden Lake, Killaloe, Pembroke, Petawawa, Renfrew.

I am very proud that the community are rallying behind **Backpack Plus** and once again proving that Renfrew County residents and businesses have caring hearts, along with a commitment to include all children, regardless of their socio-economic status.

If you can help in any way, big or small, it would be truly appreciated. Together we can make a difference in the lives of our Renfrew County children.

Yours truly,

Lyn Smith, Coordinator
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