

# Intuit steps up for students in need: CSA combines forces to provide Back-to-School Backpacks



Written by Mary Beth Hislop - Town Crier Staff Writer

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Photo Photos Courtesy Of CsaBackpacks and balloons, await CSA's youngest clients inside its Stierlin Road facility, while outside, students preparing for the new school year enjoy sunshine and Sprinkles Cupcakes.

It's that time of year – new clothes, backpacks, paper, pencils and pens. But for many students whose families are in need, the start of a school year doesn't herald new fashion styles or school supplies.

That's when the Back-to-School Backpacks and Operation School Bell programs step in.

Among its many local philanthropic projects, the Assistance League of Los Altos' Operation School Bell provides 250 backpacks filled with school supplies appropriate for students in different grade levels for the Mountain View-based Community Services Agency (CSA), which distributes them to eligible families through its Back-to-School Backpacks program.

In 2008, at least 25 more students signed up for backpacks than were supplied. This year, CSA received 1,616 requests, leaving the agency short 1,366 to accommodate those in need, according to Alison Hopkins, CSA's director of volunteer services.

Moreover, just like last year, no organization stepped up to fund CSA's accompanying \$20 shoe-voucher program, which offers families a gift certificate for Payless Shoes.

Providing shoes for children and filling a 1,366 gap in packs was looking grim – until Intuit Inc. stepped in.

In the know

It really came down to who you know and what others know about you – something membership resource manager Dianna Eckhardt said makes the Mountain View Chamber of Commerce a valuable resource for its 32 non-profit organizations and 550-plus business members. CSA is one of those members – so is Intuit.

Hopkins participates in the chamber's YIPEE program – Young Innovative Professional Entrepreneurs, Etc. – so does Intuit's Terilyn Monroe.

So when Intuit was searching for an opportunity to contribute to a need in its own backyard, in the community where it is headquartered, Eckhardt knew CSA needed shoes and backpacks, because she knew Hopkins.

"We thought CSA was the best fit," Eckhardt said. "We obviously want to help businesses."

And Monroe knew about the safety net of services CSA provides families and individuals in need, because she knew Hopkins.

Though CSA administers several programs from its food pantry, Chefs Who Care and Holiday Toy programs, the Back-to-School Backpacks program appealed to Intuit. And the quantity of packs and vouchers needed didn't seem to faze anyone from the company.

"They decided to 'adopt' all our children," Hopkins said. "This need came up at a moment's notice," said Harry Pforzheimer, Intuit's chief communications officer and marketing leader. "We know a person's well-being and financial success (are) tied to education."

### A culture of caring

Founded in 1983 and ranked No. 49 in Fortune 500's "100 Best Companies to Work For" 2009, Intuit has grown into a global company with approximately 8,000 employees. As innovator of personal-finance software such as Quicken, QuickBooks and TurboTax, Intuit is not so quick to take the money and run.

Intuit's "We Care & Give Back" program is one of six core values the company embraces, Pforzheimer said.

Each year, Intuit requires employees to volunteer 32 hours as individuals or teams in their communities, hours that are fully paid by Intuit.

"When you've got 8,000 employees and 32 hours, there's a lot of stuff going on," Pforzheimer said. "That's just part of our culture. It significantly enhances employees' engagement."

With a Web site and word out to employees worldwide, Intuit established a donation drive in June, promising to match all contributions greater than \$20. In just weeks, donations garnered enough to fund 1,400 backpacks, 1,600 \$20 shoe vouchers, some extra money for CSA – and a little more.

### Getting from giving

Last week, Intuit and CSA joined forces to distribute the first batch of backpacks and vouchers with a little icing on the cake – bracelets, Sprinkles Cupcakes and Jamba Juice – amid tables decorated with balloons and entertainment provided by a pair of mimes at CSA's Stierlin Road facility.

"The kids loved the mimes," Hopkins said. "Intuit did a wonderful job of making them feel welcome."

But Pforzheimer said Intuit's 20 top executives and 15 volunteers received more than they gave.

"It was an unbelievably meaningful experience for all of us," he said.

A mother of five children especially moved Pforzheimer. Even though all of them would receive backpacks, the mother would have had to choose which of the five could have a new pair of shoes this year.

"She was in tears because now all five can have new shoes," he said. "I live in Los Altos. Sometimes you're isolated from the needs in our own area."

The initial semi-back-to-school celebration served 185 families with 364 children, Hopkins said, and 684 cupcakes and 680 Jamba Juices, according to Pforzheimer.

More importantly, Hopkins said, several clients expressed how welcome they felt at the facility and at being treated with dignity and respect.

### A never-ending story

The increasing numbers of families and individuals in need of CSA's services is reflective of the turmoil in the economy. It's the impetus for people seeking assistance from organizations such as CSA that offer support services, from food to funds.

"We have more kids and more families coming to us," said Jim Boin, CSA's development director. "With Intuit's online drive, they're stepping up and doing it to help."

There is never an end to people's needs, according to Boin.

"Whatever food we get, we give out," he said. "There's a never-ending need for it."

And though Pforzheimer couldn't promise Back-to-School Backpacks support would become an annual fundraiser for Intuit, he believes in CSA's mission.

"We do events like this all the time," he said. "I'm sure working with CSA is on our list."

Contact Mary Beth Hislop at [marybethh@latc.com](mailto:marybethh@latc.com).

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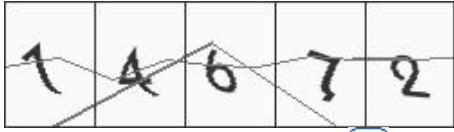
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