



**Media Contact:**  
Meredith Ghrist Bergstrom  
main: 479.750.1221, direct: 479.845.6022  
mbergstrom@unitedwaynwa.org

**NEWS RELEASE**  
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**United Way of Northwest Arkansas Collects 110,000 School Supplies, Distributes to Local Schools**

**Lowell, AR** – Over the weekend of July 23 and 24, 437 volunteers dedicated 938 total hours to collecting 110,000 school supplies in front of Walmart locations throughout the region as part of United Way of Northwest Arkansas' (UWNWA) Stuff the Bus initiative. The event was sponsored by Mars Energy Bars for the second year in a row.

UWNWA partners with school districts and Walmart stores to park actual school buses outside stores, where volunteers bring the supplies as they are collected. Supplies are sorted, counted, and stacked high on the seat rows before they head back to school counselors to distribute.

In addition the weekend of Stuff the Bus, many companies and churches hosted school supply drives on-site, allowing UWNWA to ensure that rural school districts also receive needed backpacks and school supplies. The Walmart Martin Luther King Building stuffed 300 backpacks to distribute in Decatur.

With 39,000 children in Northwest Arkansas on the free and reduced lunch program, a large majority of these families are constantly making decisions between food and other basic necessities. United Way's Stuff the Bus initiative helps to ensure low-income families do not face that choice when it comes to school supplies for their kids. The estimated cost of expendable school supplies (those that need to be re-purchased every year) is \$35-\$50 per child, which can put a great deal of stress on some families' tight budgets.

A major focus for UWNWA is helping children and youth achieve their potential through education. We believe that by focusing on giving kids the supplies they need, they will have a higher confidence level and begin school ready to learn.

This initiative also supports UWNWA's LIVE UNITED movement. Through engaging the community in giving school supplies, advocating for those in need and volunteering to collect contributions, the Northwest Arkansas region is coming together to help reach out a hand to one and improve the condition of all.

Stuff the Bus is in its fifth year in Northwest Arkansas. Over that time, United Way staff, volunteers and the community have collected or contributed more than 335,000 supplies.

Families in need of school supplies can contact their local school counselor, or call United Way's information and referral line by dialing 2-1-1.

**About United Way of Northwest Arkansas**

United Way is dedicated to helping advance the good of all in our community through focusing on key issue areas such as education, income and health to create lasting changes in our community. By engaging individuals and companies around giving, advocating and volunteering for these types of issues we can help ensure our vision of having a LIVE UNITED story from every voice. For more information about how to Live United, please visit our website at [www.unitedwaynwa.org](http://www.unitedwaynwa.org).