



247 Factory St., Watertown, NY 13601—(315) 782-8440 - (315) 782-8441  
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**For Immediate Release**

Contact Drew Mangione, Director of Development

***You Helped More Than 1,200 Kids Start School Right Last Year...We Need YOU this Year Too!***

**REMEMBER: Don't Discard Your Gently Used Backpack, Donate It  
Your Watertown Urban Mission Gearing Up for 2015-16 School Year**

Your Mission Collecting Backpacks, School Supplies to Get Ready for Distribution in Late August

WATERTOWN (July 1, 2015) – With school out and Independence Day approaching, your Watertown Urban Mission is urging people to donate gently used backpacks now to help neighbors in need to attain their own piece of the American Dream by being better prepared for school.

“Part of the American Dream today is an education that equips our young people to find their own success,” said Erika Flint, executive director. “Your commitment to this school supply drive and distribution over the last three years has helped more than 1,200 students each year to start the school year ready to learn. Thank you for your generosity in advance for your continued response to meeting these needs.”

The call for donations so soon after the close of the school year is to ensure that any parent who might typically buy a new backpack for their child each year knows that this year's backpack can make another child very happy in the next school year. Over the months of July and August, your generosity is needed to fill another 1,200 backpacks or more for families who struggle to afford these items.

“When your donations ensure that every student is prepared, you are making it easier for our hard working and dedicated educators to ensure each child, from all walks of life, gets the most out of their education,” said Robert Bowen, who oversees the collection and distribution as Critical Needs Coordinator at the Mission. “We are incredibly grateful for your support and the impact it has on so many young children.”

Each backpack is tailored for different age groups so that Pre-K and Kindergarten students receive age appropriate supplies, while elementary, middle school and high school students receive supplies appropriate for their needs. These backpacks are pre-packed and the students have the opportunity just before the school year starts to come to the Mission and pick out their favorite one, giving each child supplies they need, while also maintaining a sense of dignity for the family.

To donate your backpack or other school supplies to the Critical Needs Program, simply bring them to the drop off zone behind the Watertown Urban Mission and Impossible Dream Thrift Store at 247 Factory St., Watertown, or contact the Mission administrative offices at 315-782-8440.

Items that you can donate to help your neighbors in need include: backpacks, pencils, pens, crayons, markers, highlighters, colored pencils, dry erase markers, lined paper, spiral notebooks, index cards, 1” binders, calculators, pencil boxes, rulers, scissors, glue sticks, hand sanitizer. Thank you for your support.

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