



**UNITED
COMMUNITY
MINISTRIES**

At the Heart of Community

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Smiles for Eager Students Thanks to Generous Community Support for UCM Back To School Drive



Photo 1: 09-02-16_UCM_BackToSchool_photo1.jpg Photo 2: 09-02-16_UCM_BackToSchool_photo2.jpg
Photos as 300 dpi attached to email for media distribution.

Photo 1 Caption:

Excited first grader Josephine Oppomg is pictured with her family showing off the backpack she picked out in her favorite colors. Her younger sister is not in school yet but got to select a new book to take home.

Photo 2 Caption:

Pictured at UCM helping to distribute backpacks are volunteers Erica Beck with her sixth grade daughter Isabel, friend sixth grader Hannah Hancock, and fourth grade daughter Anja. The girls attend Belle View Elementary School where they are members of the Girls On The Run team, which Mrs. Beck coaches.

We all know the value of a good education. A big part of success in school is having the right supplies -- which can be expensive, especially for families who are struggling to make ends meet. Thanks to generous community support, more than 700 students

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registered with United Community Ministries got to choose backpacks filled with supplies, ensuring they start school ready to succeed.

“We want to thank all our supporters for putting those big smiles on the faces of so many students and relieved parents,” says Emily Griffin, who coordinated the UCM program this year. “Our Back to School program relies completely on the generosity of our community and the dozens of volunteers who helped to sort supplies, stuff the backpacks, and assist with distribution. The response this year was overwhelmingly generous.”

We are especially grateful to the many groups that hosted collection drives for UCM this year, including Aldersgate United Methodist Church (Vacation Bible School), Alexandria Religious Friends, Belle View Elementary Girls On The Run Team, Bethany Lutheran Church, Calvary Presbyterian Church, Five Below Store at Mount Vernon Plaza, Grounded Coffee Shop, Heritage Presbyterian Church, Hollin Meadows Swim Team, Messiah Lutheran Church, Mount Vernon Presbyterian Church, Mount Vernon United Methodist Church, The Mueller Family, Plymouth Haven Baptist Church (Vacation Bible School), St. James Episcopal Church, Saint Louis Catholic Church, Thirty-One Gifts, Vornado/Charles E. Smith (Crystal City), Watergate at Landmark Condominiums, Weichert Realtors Alexandria/ Old Town, and West Potomac High School Dance Team.

UCM has many opportunities for individuals and groups of all ages to get involved to volunteer, across all program areas and for all talents and schedules. If you or your group would like to host a collection drive for food donations, used children’s books, or healthy snacks for UCM’s community center programs for children, contact Emily Griffin, UCM Volunteer Coordinator, at emily.griffin@ucmagency.org or 571.255.8973.

United Community Ministries (UCM) mobilizes the power of community to equip, educate, and empower people to measurably improve their lives. For more than 46 years, UCM has provided a vital connection between people in need and the people committed to helping them thrive. Services include:

- **Immediate Help.** For families and individuals in crisis, UCM provides counseling, food, financial aid, and referrals to other resources.
- **Children’s Programs.** UCM provides the next generation with essential education and enriching experiences, including full-day early care and learning, new parent education, and after-school programs for youth leadership development and computer access.
- **Adult Education.** UCM helps immigrant adults integrate into the community and contribute to and share in its economic growth through financial literacy, English as a Second Language (ESL) and citizenship classes.

In Fiscal Year 2015, thanks to generous community support, UCM provided life-changing assistance to 10,200 individuals in 4,000 families in the Alexandria portion of Fairfax County. This included 5,000 children – more than any other private nonprofit agency in the Huntington-Mount Vernon area.