

OPINION

Help Children Arrive at School Prepared

Many opportunities to contribute; tax-free back-to-school shopping is Aug. 5-7 across Virginia.

The first day of school each year is fraught with anticipation and anxiety. Many local students will be concerned about what they wear, who they will see, what it will be like. They've already had multiple shopping trips, online and otherwise, to be sure they have the supplies and extras they need.

We live in an area where many, if not most, families have the means and desire to do almost whatever it takes to give their children the best chances for success.

But for thousands of students, families lack the financial resources to equip them for success on the first day of school and beyond.

In our affluent area, there are many poor families, families who are barely making it, families who are not able to indulge their children in a shopping spree before school begins, families who are already having trouble making up for the meals their children would be getting at school.

In Fairfax County Public Schools, more than 27 percent of more than 184,000 students are poor enough to qualify for subsidized meals. That's more than 50,000 children in Fairfax County who are going through the summer without their usual access to breakfast and lunch. For many of those children, having a fully equipped backpack on the first day of school is out of reach.

In the City of Alexandria, about 60 percent of the Alexandria Public Schools students are poor enough to qualify for subsidized meals. That's more than 8,000 of the city's 13,000-plus students.

In Arlington, more than 32 percent of the county's 23,000-plus students are poor enough to receive subsidized meals; more than 7,000 students.

Help these students get started on the right foot by contributing to one of the many local backpack drives.

Virginia sales tax holiday for school supplies and clothing is Aug. 5-7, 2016. Purchases of most school supplies, clothing and footwear are exempt from the Virginia sales tax. Each

eligible individual school supply item must be priced at \$20 or less, and each eligible article of clothing and footwear must be priced at \$100 or less. See www.tax.virginia.gov/content/sales-tax-holiday.

Where to give in Fairfax County

❖ **Fairfax County Collect for Kids** is a public private partnership that provides local children from economically challenged families with the school supplies they need to begin the school year, and has provided more than 100,000 supply kits and backpacks since 2010.

Collect for Kids is made possible through a partnership with Kids R First, Fairfax County Public Schools, the Fairfax County Office of Public and Private Partnerships, Apple Federal Credit Union and numerous community-based organizations (some listed here) and businesses in the Fairfax County area who are working together to provide supplies in a more cost-effective and efficient way. See collectforkids.org/resources.

❖ **Cornerstones** is working to provide backpacks and other necessities to 3,500 Reston and Herndon area students. You can buy backpacks and other items online and have them delivered to Cornerstones. Or deliver the backpacks to Cornerstones Administrative Office Aug. 8-12, 2016, Monday-Friday, 9 a.m.-5 p.m., 11150 Sunset Hills Road, Suite 210, Reston. In addition to backpacks, Cornerstones also requests donations of new underwear for elementary school age children, and Payless gift card donations (\$25) so young clients can get a new pair of shoes. Contact Cornerstones at 571-323-9568 or volunteer@cornerstonesva.org. Visit www.cornerstonesva.org/donations/drives/back-to-school/

❖ **United Community Ministries'** annual Back to School campaign is underway. Donations are needed by Friday, Aug. 5. A gift of \$40 completely outfits one student. Please drop checks and backpacks off at UCM's main office (7511 Fordson Road, Alexandria, 22306) weekdays from 9 a.m.-5:30 p.m. If your group

needs to make special arrangements for a large donation, please contact Emily Griffin. For more information, contact Emily at emily.griffin@ucmagency.org or by 571-255-8973 or visit www.ucmagency.org/back-to-school-2016.html.

❖ **Britepaths**, formerly OUR DAILY BREAD, participates in the Collect for Kids Back to School Program each summer and is working to help more than 2,500 students in central Fairfax have everything they need to succeed this fall. Cash donations help purchase supplies at a steep discount. Please donate by Aug. 5. Donate backpacks or calculators by Aug. 5. Larger size backpacks especially needed. Donate cash through Aug. 31. Checks are welcome. Make checks payable to "Britepaths." Please include "Back to School" in the memo line of the check. Mail to: Britepaths 4080 Chain Bridge Road, 2nd Floor, Fairfax, VA 22030. If delivering in person, Monday-Friday, 10 a.m.-2 p.m., except for holidays. Call ahead at 703-273-8829. Visit www.britepaths.org for more.

❖ **FACETS** is seeking to equip more than 300 students in need with backpacks filled with supplies. Use the checklist at the link below as a guide for purchasing backpacks and supplies. Place purchased supplies in backpacks or other bags and deliver to FACETS. For financial donations, please cut and mail form by Aug. 12. Drop off supplies through Aug. 12, 2016, 9 a.m.-5 p.m., Monday-Friday, 10640 Page Ave., Suite 300, Fairfax VA 22030. Contact FACETS at 703-272-3710 or JDantonio@FacetsCares.org or visit facetscares.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/07/SchoolSupplyFlyerFY17.pdf

❖ **Northern Virginia Family Service.** Mail checks (payable to NVFS, with BTS in the memo line) to: Northern Virginia Family Service, Attn: Back to School, 10455 White Granite Drive, Suite 100, Oakton, VA 22124. Donations of new backpacks and new school supplies (we unfortunately cannot accept these items after use) will be accepted on July 29, 3-6 p.m.; and Aug. 1, 10 a.m.-6 p.m. at 13926 Metrotech Drive, Chantilly, VA 20151 (between Buon Appetito and Cafein; please note storefront windows are whitewashed). Contact Pam Boyle at 571-748-2537 or visit www.nvfs.org/backtoschool.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Airport Noise Exaggerated

To the Editor:

This letter responds to the article concerning airplane noise that appeared in the June 30, 2016 edition of the Mount Vernon Gazette.

It seems to me that the unstated goal is the closure of Reagan Washington National Airport (DCA). The most effective way to accomplish the foregoing would be for all of the 300 attendees of the meeting to write their congressman and senators and demand

that DCA be closed. Reagan Washington National airport exists because the congressman and senators want it to remain open. Many members of both houses fly to their home districts each week to consult with their constituents. Closing DCA ain't gonna happen. Two alternatives:

1. Quieter aircraft. Noise emanating from departing aircraft has been greatly reduced over the past 20 years. In addition, improved jet engines allow the aircraft to climb much faster to reach cruising altitude. Aircraft landings make very little noise. All that is technically possible has already been done.

2. Move away. Distance from DCA would reduce exposure to aircraft noise.

I live in Stratford Landing, about 18 miles south of the airport. Noise from the major carriers is virtually non-existent. The only aircraft noise I hear is from rare helicopter flights.

I find ludicrous the allegation from a resident of Hollin Hall, about 16 miles south of the airport, that airplane noise was knocking over her drinking glasses, as I do the allegation by councilman Mr. Storck that community approval should have been sought before implementation of

the NEXTGEN air traffic control system. My opinion is that issue of aircraft noise has been settled years ago. The bone is picked clean. Let's move on.

Kenneth L. Kladiva
Mount Vernon

Write

The deadline for letters is noon Friday. Letters must be signed. Include home address and phone number. Letters are routinely edited for libel, grammar, good taste and factual errors. Email gazette@connectionnewspapers.com

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