?? ? Local children are preparing for heading back to the classrooms. While registration for the new school year has began so has the back to school shopping. Along with the new clothes, shoes, textbooks and grade level, comes all the necessary school supplies that are needed by each student.

For some students in the northern Clark County area that may not be such an easy task. Therefore, volunteers at the NCOC have been preparing for the third annual Backpack Blast. They have been diligently filling backpacks with donated school items.

“We collect them and pass them on to the schools,” stated Ruthie Jackson, Director of the NCOC. “Then the schools decide who will receive the donated backpacks.”

The outreach center is the collection point for the community project but according to Jackson the school has the sole decision on who will receive the backpacks. The Backpack Blast will deliver backpacks to all northern Clark County schools including Henryville, New Washington, Sellersburg and Charlestown.

The backpacks will be distributed to students in all grade levels and will include items for back to school such as glue, scissors, paper, pens, pencils, folders and Kleenex.

The students will also receive a toothbrush and toothpaste, which have been provided in the past.

The Greater North Clark Healthcare Foundation always makes a donation to the worthy cause.

“For the third year in a row they are helping sponsor this community event and if it were not for them this program would not be possible,” Jackson stated.

She continued, “They always help us and it is greatly appreciated.”

Jackson was quick to explain what to do if you don’t want to have to fight the crowded back to school section at the local department stores.

“If they want to help but don’t want to shop, all they need to do is just donate the money. Volunteers will then do the shopping for them,” Jackson explained.

The NCOC’s goal is collect 200 to 250 backpacks for distribution. Last year they collected 200.

If you would like to make a donation of a backpack full of back to school goodies just purchase a backpack and fill it with necessary items like glue, paper, scissors, colored pencils, pencils, pens, school box, etc., and drop it off at the NCOC.

“All kids go to school on the first day with new backpacks. I know some people don’t think that is very important but it really is. They will go to school with all the items needed and a new backpack and at least for that one day they are on even ground. It’s a mental health thing. It’s not always about their physical health but sometimes we have to worry about their mental health as well,” Jackson concluded.