



## PRESS RELEASE

July 22, 2019

The City of Des Moines has partnered with Highline Schools Foundation for the last five years to provide backpacks filled with school supplies to students attending Des Moines area schools. This year the City has awarded \$4,500 to further support this important event. There are many community partners that come together to ensure children in our area receive the support they need for the school year ahead. The City of Des Moines remains committed to supporting the Back to School Resource Fair.

The City provides staff on the planning committee, as well as park space at Steven J. Underwood Park to host the event, but felt that a monetary contribution would further grow and support this important yearly event.

For many students in the Des Moines area, back to school shopping for clothes and supplies is not a reality. Highline Public Schools (HPS), one of the most diverse school district in Washington State, serves over 18,300 students. Of the student body:

- 12,493 qualify for free- or reduced-price meals
- 8,798 speak a first language other than English
- 1,200 experienced homelessness during the 2017-18 school year

Because of this, local businesses, service clubs and organizations partner with Highline Schools Foundation to offer Back to School Resource Fairs throughout the district. They understand the importance of making sure that these students have the supplies and resources they need to successfully begin the school year. That means dental/health checks, personal hygiene products, parent supports, basic needs resources, and backpacks filled with all the school supplies a student would need...**an expense that many of our families cannot afford.**

Here are the demographics of the Des Moines schools that are served with this program:

School	Student Population May, 2018	Free/Reduced Lunch Rate
Des Moines Elementary	390	49.0%
Midway Elementary	665	76.2%
North Hill Elementary	588	41.3%
Parkside Elementary	639	61.3%
Pacific Middle School	623	57.5%
Mount Rainier High School	1,574	47.7%

This year, there are four Back to School Resource Fairs scheduled so that **all students in Highline Public Schools** who need assistance will receive it. They anticipate distributing over 8,000 backpacks filled with the necessary school supplies for students to start ready for success. The resource fairs will happen:

- Des Moines (August 8, 2019)
- White Center (August 9, 2019) – in partnership with the White Center Community Development Association
- Burien (August 14, 2019)
- SeaTac (August 15, 2019) – in partnership with Lutheran Community Services Northwest

If you have any questions about the Back to School Resource Fair, and you'd like to get involved, please feel free to contact them directly at 206-631-3120. You can also visit their website at <http://www.highlineschoolsfoundation.org/>

As always, the City Council, staff and Human Services Committee continue to be dedicated to supporting local social service agencies and we will continue to highlight these organizations and how they are serving the community.