



Press release: The start of a new school year is only one month away. Parents will head out to buy school supplies and new clothes for their children to start the school year fresh. Sadly, there are parents in Brandon who simply do not have the means to buy new clothes or school supplies for their children. There are many families in the Brandon community that struggle to survive on an annual income below \$20,000 a year. Children arrive at school without even the most basic school supplies. Even in today's high-tech world, these supplies, ranging from pens and pencils to binders and paper, are essential. Without the proper tools, it will be difficult for children to complete the schoolwork that will shape both their own future successes and the educational health of any community.

Tools for School is a community initiative of United Way of Brandon intended to ensure that all students receive the educational supplies they need for classroom success. United Way works with the Brandon school division, community groups and organizations in our community to coordinate the collection and distribution of school supplies. Brand new school supplies will be donated by the general public in the next month at Staples, Wal-Mart, Christie's Office Plus, Star FM/CKLQ Radio, Chum Television, KX96/101.1 the Farm, Investor's Group and United Way of Brandon. Collection boxes have been set up at these locations now and will stay out until the end of August. Supplies are then collated by volunteers and distributed to the school division who distribute the backpacks full of supplies to students in a discreet manner.

Unfortunately, the need for kits continues to grow each year. Despite the prosperity in our community, there are parents who struggle to provide even the most basic school supplies for their children. The need will only continue to grow as expenses such as housing; food, gas and utilities continue to rise. For so many parents, there are not enough resources to meet the needs of their families. Now, more than ever, the community needs to pull together to ensure that all children have the opportunity to learn and succeed in school and in life. Something as simple as pencils and paper can make a world of difference to a child. It's as simple as having school supplies or not having school supplies.

Tools for School initiative is important to our community because it gives less advantaged kids the same opportunities to be successful in school as other children. "Tools for School make such a difference for kids who otherwise wouldn't have new school supplies. It gives kids a level playing ground."

Not having new school supplies also makes children aware that they are different. A social stigma exists for children who are different from the other kids at school – not having new supplies makes a child different. **Tools for School** provides children with the basics they need. More importantly, the supplies are brand new and different. The goal of the program is to get children the supplies they need so they can focus on learning and developing their minds and social skills

Children are the future of our community, and we need to do what we can to ensure they are all given the same opportunities to succeed in school and in life. All children should have the opportunity to learn and not have to worry about standing out because they don't have school supplies. When picking up supplies for your children, pick up extra supplies for children who otherwise would go to school without the proper tools. Give a child the opportunity to learn on a level field.

For more information please contact Debbie Arsenault, United Way Executive Director at 571-8929. Thank you.