

**August 23, 2007**

***Students in need get 'Write Start'***

**Santa Cruz Sentinel**

**By: Donna Jones**

Karen Lemon hopes to hand out 2,000 backpacks filled to with school supplies to children who might otherwise start the school year without the delight of freshly sharpened pencils, new crayons and clean notebooks.

Write Start's needs list

- Backpacks in dark solid colors other than royal blue or red.
- School supplies, such as colored pencils, spiral notebooks, 2-inch binders and binder paper, pencils, pens, rulers, 16-pack crayons, calculators and English-Spanish dictionaries.
- Santa Cruz Metro bus passes.
- Gift certificates for shoes or clothing.
- Checks payable to SCCOE Students in Transition Program.

But donations are down for the Write Start program, which Lemon coordinates at the Santa Cruz County Office of Education. With only a week left before schools open in North County, Lemon's only halfway to her goal.

So she couldn't have been more pleased when 11-year-old Autumn Bushard showed up Wednesday at the county office on Bay Avenue with a van load of goodies she purchased after soliciting \$655 in donations Saturday outside Kmart in Scotts Valley with the help of her sister, Simone, 8.

"It's such a big help," Lemon said. "I was amazed when I saw what the girls brought in."

Autumn, a Ben Lomond resident who is homeschooled, said she was inspired to help after watching her mother's support for the Red Cross in the past.

"It was fun," Autumn said. Her effort started earlier this summer when she became concerned about the victims of the fire in South Lake Tahoe in June. She collected a roomful of new and "gently used" blankets and clothes, only to discover rescue workers no longer needed them, her father, Christopher Bushard said.

So Bushard said his daughter looked for someone else in need, and eventually found Tom Adams, a social work supervisor for Santa Cruz County's foster care program. He hooked Autumn up with the Foster Parent Association, which accepts clothing donations, and with Write Start. Autumn spent the rest of the summer working on the project.

"She wants [her effort] to be contagious," Bushard said. "And hopefully it will be."

Lemon hopes so too. More than 1,400 students will start the school year officially

homeless, which can mean anything from car camping and couch surfing to living in shelters, she said. Then there's the hundreds of families who live paycheck to paycheck and have a hard time covering extra expenditures.

Lemon said anyone who wants to donate can call her at 477-5422. North County parents in need can call the same number. In Pajaro Valley, parents can call 761-6125.

Contact Donna Jones at [djones@santacruzsentinel.com](mailto:djones@santacruzsentinel.com).