

Equality Health Foundation Leads Well-Child & Back-to-School Drive

Written by Mallory Gleich
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In an effort to ensure children begin the school year healthy and fully equipped, [Equality Health Foundation](#) launched its annual **Well-Child & Back-to-School Drive**. This year's event was held in partnership with Mercy Care, UnitedHealthcare, Banner Health, Equality Health, and the Tony & Milena Astorga Foundation.

In June, volunteers came together at the headquarters in Scottsdale to pack 2,000 backpacks. Each was filled with essential school supplies and wellness resources that will be distributed to students across Arizona and Texas throughout the summer. The initiative is closely tied to the Foundation's network of pediatric and family medicine providers, who will hand out backpacks during well-child visits. These visits offer comprehensive health screenings, immunizations, and physical exams; key services aimed at boosting school readiness and closing gaps in preventive care.

"Through this drive, we're not only helping students start the school year prepared, we're connecting families to preventive care that can make a lasting impact," said Tomás León, president and executive director of Equality Health Foundation. "By partnering with providers who serve these communities every day, we're able to deliver care proactively and promote well-being as a foundation for academic success."

Backpack distribution will continue throughout July at participating healthcare practices. Families attending these appointments will benefit from a range of critical health services, including vision, hearing, dental, and developmental screenings, interventions that can identify early concerns and support long-term wellness.

Despite their importance, well-child visits are often missed. National data shows that children skip between 30 and 50 percent of these visits before age six. Factors such as limited transportation, inflexible work schedules, and lack of access to information contribute to these gaps, particularly in underserved communities. Equality Health Foundation's approach - connecting back-to-school preparation with trusted healthcare visits - is helping to bridge these barriers and reinforce the connection between health and educational success.



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The economic challenges families face are also a key focus of the initiative. According to Deloitte, the average back-to-school spending per K-12 student is projected to reach \$586 this year. For many households, that cost is simply out of reach. This year's drive provides some relief, offering fully stocked backpacks at no cost, along with valuable health education resources.

"Thanks to numerous outreach opportunities last year, including a series of back-to-school events, more than 8,800 Mercy Care members were able to complete their well-child visits ahead of the school year," Chief Medical Officer Dr. Gagandeep Singh said. "Partnering with organizations helps us respond more effectively to the social and economic barriers many Arizona families face. We're honored to be part of this important initiative."

The drive's continued impact is made possible through the support of sponsors, community organizations, and dedicated volunteers. **Equality Health Foundation** expressed gratitude to all who help make the program possible and reaffirmed its mission of creating healthier, more equitable communities. The **Well-Child & Back-to-School Drive** is one of many initiatives aimed at building a future where every child has the opportunity to thrive—both in the classroom and beyond. Learn more at equalityhealthfoundation.org.