

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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**SCHOOL 15 STUDENTS RECEIVE BACKPACKS AND SCHOOL SUPPLIES FROM UNITED WAY
OF PASSAIC COUNTY &
ST. PAUL’S COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION**

PATERSON – Enough backpacks and school supplies to help more than 500 students were delivered to Public School No. 15 today by two of the district’s community partners, the United Way of Passaic County and St. Paul’s Community Development Corporation. School 15 students will receive the bookbags and supplies tomorrow, which is the first day of school for students.

“Year after year, Paterson Public Schools has been able to count on the United Way of Passaic County and St. Paul’s Community Development Corporation to do everything they can to help the district’s students and their families,” said Superintendent of Schools Eileen F. Shafer. “The pandemic continues to harshly impact many Paterson families. I thank everyone at these wonderful organizations for providing backpacks and school supplies to the Public School No. 15’s students, and for all they have done to help our students and families for many years.”

“As we prepare for all of our students to return to school, I am grateful that they will have backpacks and school supplies thanks to the generous help of the United Way of Passaic County and St. Paul’s Community Development Corporation,” said School 15 Principal Ramona Garcia. “This kind assistance helps families in our school community and gives students many of the items they’ll need to be academically successful in the coming school year.”

United Way of Passaic County collects backpacks and school supplies every year through their program, **Backpacks For Kids**. The program, which United Way has led for 15 years, distributes more than 1,000 filled backpacks each year to schools and non-profit groups in Passaic County. The bags and school supplies are donated by community members and businesses.

“The purpose of the **Backpacks For Kids** program is to mobilize community support for student success,” said United Way Interim President & CEO Mary Celis. “So many community members want to support students and share the message that we care about their success. With rising inflation, it is more important than ever to support students whose families may experience financial hardship. I would like to thank our donors for their generosity: Enterprise, TD Bank, Visions Credit Union, BP, Daughtery Business Solutions, and the many congregations and individual donors who contributed. Together we can give students a strong start to the school year.”



St. Paul's Community Development Corporation's AmeriCorps volunteers are helping to organize collection efforts and fill the backpacks with school supplies. Each bag will be filled with notebooks, pens, pencils, erasers, and crayons.

Both organizations have a longstanding partnership with School 15. St. Paul's is the provider of community school services there, and United Way coordinates a volunteer reading program in grades K-2.

"We are grateful for the partnership that we've been able to establish with the United Way of Passaic County," said St. Paul's Community Development Corporation's Executive Director Richard Williams. "It's collective efforts like Backpacks For Kids, and so much more, that allow us to make a difference in the lives of students at School 15. We appreciate United Way's ongoing support, as well as that of our dedicated AmeriCorps members for whom community events such as this would not be possible if they were not available to lend a helping hand."

Paterson Public Schools serves about 25,000 students from pre-K to 12th grade in New Jersey's third largest city. While the Paterson community may be classified as low-income, many of its students are high achieving. More elementary school students are reading at or above grade level, and more high school students are earning college credits through Advanced Placement exams and taking college-level courses before graduation. Paterson Public Schools stands out as one of only 17 districts in New Jersey to offer the competitive International Baccalaureate program, and one of only four districts with a P-TECH high school, a program that, in collaboration with IBM and Passaic County Community College, graduates students with an associate degree in applied science and practical tech sector experience.

United Way of Passaic County is a nonprofit organization serving the communities of Passaic County since 1935. With a mission to improve the lives of people in Passaic County by mobilizing the caring power of the community, the organization's programs include children's literacy, college access, financial empowerment, and building healthy communities. More information can be found at www.unitedwaypassaic.org.

St. Paul's Community Development Corporation (SPCDC) has its roots in St. Paul's Episcopal Church, which has served Paterson, New Jersey, for more than 200 years. SPCDC's initial objective was to improve service delivery, expand funding possibilities and increase volunteer leadership beyond the Vestry of St. Paul's Church. Today, SPCDC provides various human service programs to more than 5,000 families and individuals annually, including adult basic education, workforce development training, and affordable housing. Over 200 volunteers per year support our full-time staff. The ethnic and socioeconomic mix of our board of directors and staff reflects the diversity of the community served.

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