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Backpacks 4 Kids AZ Partners with West-MEC to Help Hundreds of Valley Students Prepare for the School Year

SURPRISE, Ariz. (July 20, 2026) – Hundreds of Valley students are headed back to school with the supplies and confidence they need for a successful year thanks to Backpacks 4 Kids AZ, which hosted its annual back-to-school giveaway on Saturday, July 18, at West-MEC's Northwest Campus in Surprise.

Backpacks 4 Kids AZ is a local 501(c)(3) nonprofit dedicated to supporting children and families through school supplies, food assistance, and community outreach. By partnering with local businesses, organizations, and volunteers, the nonprofit works year-round to help ensure students have the essential resources they need to succeed both in and out of the classroom.

This year's event was an incredible success, and we were honored to supply more than 500 Arizona students with backpacks, school supplies, and other essentials to help them start the school year prepared," said Michelle Tallberg, Director of Backpacks 4 Kids AZ. "There is nothing more rewarding than seeing young students walk away excited, confident, and ready to tackle a new school year. We're incredibly grateful to our volunteers and partners for helping make this day possible." Our mission doesn't stop here. We host events throughout the year to continue supporting local families, and we encourage everyone to get involved."

West-MEC proudly served as the host venue for this year's event, opening its Northwest Campus to families while students and staff from the Medical Assisting and Cosmetology programs volunteered throughout the day in support of Backpacks 4 Kids AZ's mission.

"We have partnered with Backpacks 4 Kids AZ to support them on their incredible mission to provide school supplies to Valley families in need," said Stacy Ray, West-MEC Medical Assisting Instructor. "We are so grateful to Backpacks 4 Kids AZ for their generosity and vision. They change lives every year through this event. Watching our students walk hand in hand with elementary schoolers as they picked out their supplies was incredibly heartwarming. We saw middle school and high school students with the biggest smiles as they made their selections. There is nothing more rewarding than giving back to the community."

In addition to receiving school supplies, families were invited into West-MEC's student salon for complimentary back-to-school haircuts.

West-MEC hairstyling students worked alongside Valley beauty professionals, providing free haircuts to over 100 participants, helping students begin the school year feeling confident and ready for the classroom.

"Events like this remind our students why they chose this profession," said Allison Bearden, West-MEC Cosmetology Instructor. "A fresh haircut can give a child confidence as they walk into a new school year. We're grateful to Backpacks 4 Kids AZ for allowing our students to be part of such a meaningful day while gaining valuable hands-on experience serving real clients alongside experienced industry professionals."

The annual Backpacks 4 Kids event demonstrated the impact that can be made when nonprofit organizations, volunteers, local businesses, and educational institutions come together to support families across the Valley.

For more information about Backpacks 4 Kids AZ or to support its mission, visit bp4kidsaz.com.

To learn more about West-MEC's Medical Assisting and Hairstyling programs, visit west-mec.edu.

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About West-MEC:

West-MEC is a premier public school district specializing in Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs that equip students with skills to succeed in today's workforce. Students earn industry-recognized credentials and college credit in high-wage, in-demand career pathways, allowing them to enter the workforce, military, or continue their education immediately after graduation. West-MEC serves more than 49,000 high school students on its campuses and through partner districts. Its reach spans over 130 schools and nearly 3,900 square miles, from Paradise Valley to Wickenburg, south to Gila Bend, and west to Saddle Mountain. West-MEC also offers adult education programs to support lifelong learning and workforce development. Learn more at west-mec.edu or follow West-MEC on social media.