



SAN GABRIEL UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

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San Gabriel Unified Elementary Students Receive Free Backpacks, School Supplies

SAN GABRIEL, CA – Students from San Gabriel Unified’s Roosevelt Elementary ended their first week of school with a surprise gift of 60 backpacks full of school supplies and extra classroom supplies from Copper Moose Fitness in Pasadena.

On Aug. 24, Copper Moose employees and San Gabriel Police officers helped students sift through backpacks emblazoned with superheroes, Disney characters, unicorns, emojis and lively patterns to find the perfect one.

“I want to get a mint blue Jansport backpack and fill it with all of my school supplies,” Roosevelt fourth-grader Jaylynn Michel said. “I’m happy that they are going out of their way to provide backpacks to people who need them.”

Gym owner Joseph Hawthorne and coach Byron Espinoza approached two of their members – Roosevelt teachers Lisa Durandette and Estella Villena – about doing a backpack drive for the gym’s quarterly fundraiser.

“When I was growing up, finances were often scarce, so getting a new backpack wasn’t always an option or priority,” Espinoza said. “This project hits close to home for me. As a team, we felt that it would be a wonderful way for us to rally alongside local families and do something bigger than ourselves.”

The gym reached out to community and gym members on social media to ask for backpack and school supply donations; in exchange, donors would receive 21 free days at the gym. Strong community response helped the gym gather nearly 150 backpacks in total, surpassing its original goal of 40. The remaining backpacks will be donated to other local schools.

“We are always grateful to receive donations that support our students and families,” Roosevelt Principal Cheryl Labanaro Wilson said. “It was exciting to see how Joseph and Byron’s small gesture turned into a huge response of backpacks and supplies from the community.”

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Students also received a variety of school supplies, including notebooks, scissors, colored pencils, crayons and erasers.

“We are incredibly grateful for the support that local businesses and community members provide to our students,” SGUSD Superintendent Dr. John Pappalardo said. “Thank you to Copper Moose Fitness for helping ensure our students are prepared for the school year.”

PHOTO CAPTIONS:

SANGAB_ROOSEVELT_BACKPACK1: Roosevelt Elementary students show off their backpack selections during a backpack giveaway on Aug. 24. Cooper Moose Fitness in Pasadena donated 60 backpacks to Roosevelt students.

SANGAB_ROOSEVELT_BACKPACK2: Roosevelt Elementary students collect new school supplies donated by Copper Moose Fitness on Aug. 24.

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