

## FOCUS ASSISTS UNDERPRIVILEGED STUDENTS HEADING BACK TO SCHOOL



In early August members of FOCUS (Friends of Children United Society) got together to stuff 350 backpacks with school supplies for San Diego County underprivileged children, grades kindergarten through high school. The backpacks were then delivered to ten county agencies whose mission is similar to that of FOCUS – to assist local children in need. These agencies include ABC Youth Foundation, Aseltine School,

Christie's Place, Community Christian Service Agency, Dependency Legal Group, Episcopal Refugee Network, International Rescue Committee, Mental Health Systems, San Diego Police Department (Community Outreach), and Voices For Children.

This is the third year that FOCUS has supplied backpacks with school supplies. Additionally, they purchase school uniforms and shoes for many foster children whom they connect with through Voices For Children. Funds for purchasing the backpacks, school supplies, uniforms and shoes are raised through various fundraisers held throughout the year, along with donations and annual membership dues collected from their membership of about 200 men and women.

For all projects undertaken by FOCUS, they first receive a list of needed items from the agency or individual they wish to support and then shoppers are assigned to purchase and deliver the requested items. No money is ever given to an agency or child.

This year's backpack project organizers and shoppers were FOCUS Directors of Projects, Lesley Angelino and Lisa Alves and members Lisa Lorentzen and Cathy Willson. Fortunately, they were able to procure all of the empty backpacks from a local wholesaler, with the real challenge being the purchasing of school supplies needed to fill 350 backpacks. Supplies were specific to the grade level for the child receiving the backpack. Everything was then delivered to the Coronado Cays Home Owner's Association building for assembly by FOCUS members.

For the purchasing of school uniforms, lists of students, along with uniform specifics and sizes, were provided by Voices For Children VP of Programs, Sabrina Goosby to FOCUS President, Lorna Perez-Caster, who then shopped for and delivered the uniforms. Perez-Caster, with the assistance of Goosby, also held a shoe shopping day at a centrally located shoe store, allowing CASAs (Court Appointed Special Advocates) to bring their assigned foster child to be fitted for a pair of back-to-school shoes.

FOCUS is an all-volunteer non-profit organization which began in 1982 with the mission to raise funds in order to improve the lives of disadvantaged, disabled and military children within San Diego County. So far this year they have funded over \$76,000 in projects, which has been keeping their shoppers very busy.

FOCUS will be holding their annual Membership Champagne Reception on September 22<sup>nd</sup>, from 4-6 PM at the lovely home of Connie Bienfait and Bob Purgavie, 53 Green Turtle Road in the Coronado Cays. Although they welcome new members throughout the year, this is their main event geared towards increasing their membership. This catered event, with appetizers, desserts, champagne and other refreshments, is a wonderful opportunity for potential new members to learn more about FOCUS and the agencies that they support. If interested in attending please contact Lorna Perez-Caster at 760-470-4666 or [landgcaster@aol.com](mailto:landgcaster@aol.com). More information about FOCUS can be found on their web site at [www.focus-sdkids.org](http://www.focus-sdkids.org).