

## PR – Backpacks2006

**LAKE BUENA VISTA, Fla., Aug. 3, 2006**— Students at Hiawassee Elementary School got a surprise visit Thursday afternoon from Disney Cast Members delivering back-to-school backpacks brimming with donated school supplies for all 700 students. In gearing up for the first week of school, Disney VolunTEARS delivered a total of 10,000 backpacks and other school supplies to schools in Orange, Osceola, Lake and

Polk Counties. The backpacks included new crayons, pencils, folders, paper and other school necessities valued in excess of \$150,000. (10,000 backpacks double the amount given last year.)

Working with West Orange S.T.A.R.S., Michigan Avenue Elementary in

Osceola County, Groveland Elementary in Lake County and the HEARTS Program in Polk County. "They help boost student confidence."

In addition to the backpacks, Disney VolunTEARS contributed over 21,000 extra school supplies valued at \$169,232 to *A Gift for Teaching*.

While it took many teams to fill 10,000 backpacks, two Cast members stood out as leaders. Cast Member Arthur Nunes stands out as the "King of Backpacks". Nunes rallied his resort team members to collect over 600 backpacks during the past month. Growing up as one of 14 children, Nunes remembers all too well what it was like to get hand-me-downs, and wanted to make a difference with today's students. "At Disney, I work with some of the most caring people in the world," according to Nunes. "We're happy to put smiles on the children's faces with these back to school supplies."

If Arthur is the "King of Backpacks", then Peggy Durre should be called the "Queen". Durre led Disney-MGM Studios Cast Members to collect over 800 backpacks. Durre lives in an area of

Lake County. Durre said, "I see the children every day and know what it means to them to receive a brand new backpack at the beginning of the school year and I'm proud to be able to help make it possible."

How does one fill 10,000 backpacks? The effort required:

- 10,000 pairs of scissors
- 240,000 crayons
- 30,000 folders
- 20,000 glue sticks
- 10,100 erasers
- 120,000 pencils
- 500,000 sheets of paper

The back-to-school backpack drive is one of several initiatives in which Disney VolunTEARS are involved. In 2005 alone, Walt Disney World Resort donated \$23.7 million in cash and in-kind support to the community. Walt Disney World Cast Members also volunteered more than 203,198 hours to benefit local non-profit organizations.

The backpack drive is an initiative of *DisneyHand – Helping Kids Shine*, an initiative that seeks to build better futures for children by creating healthy, guiding relationships with adults, providing constructive free-time activities, offering character-building opportunities, and encouraging a sense of compassion for others, while helping those children who face adversity.

PHOTO: Disney VoluntEARS assist with filling the backpacks with school supplies for local school children.