

## Backpack Drive provides back-to-school basics for Cape kids

Hyannis-based Independence House collecting school supplies through August 17

ARTICLE | **EDUCATION** | AUGUST 5, 2014 07:20 AM | BY **MAGGIE KULBOKAS**



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For more than three decades, **Independence House** in Hyannis has offered a safe haven for victims of domestic and sexual violence. The dedicated staff has provided a variety of important resources including crisis intervention, counseling and resources for victims, survivors and quite often, their children.

Independence House recognizes that domestic violence not only affects a partner or spouse, but the children too. Domestic violence can be physical, emotional, psychological and verbal. It can also be financial.

Control over victims of domestic violence can mean control over purse strings. Survivors who escape and find support and refuge with organizations like Independence House frequently lack the resources for the most basic needs, according to Debra Fluet, director of the organization's Rape Crisis and Domestic Violence programs.

"At times individuals who are survivors of domestic and sexual violence may not have been allowed to work or have any money of their own so it makes it difficult to provide all the things their child may need," said Fluet.

This includes basic necessities and at the start of the school year, back-to-school supplies. In 2012, Independence house launched their **Backpack Drive** to address that need. "Survivors who leave their abusive partner often find themselves financially unstable and our program provides them a means to have one less thing to worry about," said Fluet.

During each of the first two years of the Backpack Drive, approximately 100 kids received the supplies they need to start the school year. In this, the drive's third year, Fluet is expecting to kit out another 100 kids.

When asked what kind of feedback the staff has received from the kids about the program, Fluet said words cannot describe it. "Their faces tell the story," said Fluet. "They love picking out the one [backpack] they want and you can see the pride in their faces--priceless."

As for the backpacks and school supplies, everything is needed from pens and pencils to paper and binders, calculators and protractors and everything in between. During the Backpack Drive, Independence House will be accepting donations at 160 Bassett Lane in Hyannis now through Sunday, August 17.

This year, the drive has been expanded to include gift cards for other back-to-school needs including including clothes, shoes and haircuts.

The children who receive backpacks and school supplies are in a **Child Witness to Violence or Teen Dating Violence** program at Independence House. Either they or a family member is receiving services at Independent House.

Just about every kind of school supply is needed. A complete list is available [here](#). Donations may be dropped off at the Bassett Lane address between 8 a.m. and 5 p.m., Monday through Friday. Questions about the Backpack Drive or any other Independence House program may be directed to 508-771-6507.



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This fall Independence House is celebrating its 35th anniversary with a commemorative reception planned for November 1 at the Cape Codder Resort and Spa in Hyannis.

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