

COMMUNITY

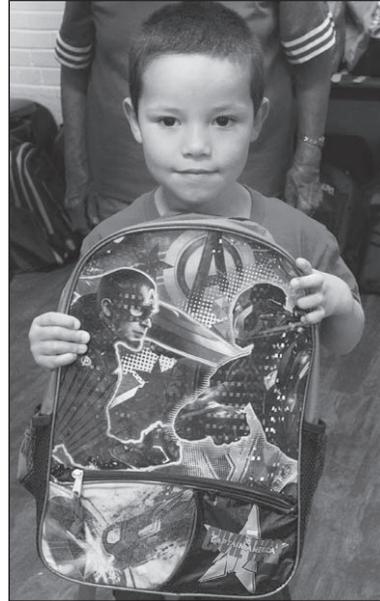
Veterans group helps local students



LEFT: Noah Cook, 9 (left), and Tyler Cook pick out backpacks with the help of Patsy Vazquez-Contes (right) and Margaret Montoya during the American GI Forum Pueblo Chapter's school supply giveaway Saturday.

ABOVE: Lyle Felton, 5, shows off the backpack he chose during the giveaway.

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BY SARAH GRASMICK
THE PUEBLO CHIEFTAIN

For the second year, a local organization was paid with big smiles and words of gratitude for giving away backpacks filled with school supplies to 80 local students.

"When the children saw that they could pick what backpack they wanted, they were just in awe," said Patsy Vazquez-Contes, chairwoman of the American GI Forum Pueblo Chapter.

The boys and girls, who were in kindergarten through 8th grade, had a variety of backpack themes to choose from on Saturday, including the Denver Broncos and Disney princesses.

"These supplies are very important because it gives the students what they need to start the school year and gets the teacher out of the bind of not having a student with the proper materials to complete their daily assignments," she said.

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Most of the funds to purchase the items came from a large corporation. Community members donated the rest.

Pueblo GI Forum, Walmart team up to provide school supplies

"We teamed up with Walmart for the second year to do this," said Vazquez-Contes. "They gave us a community grant of \$750, and then they discounted their merchandise on top of that. These supplies are worth \$2,500."

Hector P. Garcia, the founder of American GI Forum, always emphasized the importance of education.

"He believed that education is something that no one can take away from you," said Vazquez-Contes. "Our motto is, 'Education is a freedom, and freedom should be everybody's business.'"

"We were glad to be part of a giveaway program that's very well-needed across the nation."

sgrasmick@chieftain.com