



For Immediate Release

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Stuff the Bus School Supply Drive Helps Children in Need

Greater Excellence in Education Foundation and United Way of Central Maryland's Community Partnership Board of Harford County join forces for a countywide school supply drive that collected \$7,500 in school supplies for Harford County Public School students. A total of \$11,500 in school supplies were donated to public schools in Harford County for students in need.

(Edgewood, MD) August 24, 2012 -- Every year educators spend hundreds to thousands of dollars of their own money to provide school supplies for students. For the past seven years, Greater Excellence in Education Foundation (GEEF) has worked with area businesses to set up school supply donation sites for its *Tools for Schools* program. Each year these school supplies are sorted, counted, packed and delivered to the Harford County Public Schools for students in need. This year, United Way of Central Maryland's (UWCM's) Community Partnership Board of Harford County collaborated with GEEF to pick up all the school supply donations from area businesses for its 1st annual *Stuff the Bus* School Supply Drive. The *Stuff the Bus* School Supply Drive collected \$7,500 in school supplies. Added to the supplies previously collected through GEEF's *Tools for Schools* program, GEEF delivered \$11,500 in school supplies for students in need during the month of August.

"In previous years, businesses would hold a school supply drive to collect donated school supplies and I would drive around and pick up the donations," said Deb Merlock, Founder/President of GEEF. "This year with the help of United Way of Central Maryland, we increased the number of businesses that participated. And through the generosity of Anderson Bus Company in Aberdeen we drove throughout the county in a school bus, making stops at each business and filled the bus to capacity with donated school supplies."

The *Stuff the Bus* school supply drive helps to stock GEEF's *Tools for Schools* resource center. The *Tools for Schools* resource center is a store for teachers to shop for free school supplies for their students during the school year.

"Everyone was excited to see the school bus pull into their parking lot. Employees were standing outside on the curb eagerly waiting to put their donations on the bus," said Season Voelker, Senior Relationship Manager of UWCM. "We were thrilled with all of the school supplies that were donated."

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The businesses that participated in the school supply drive were J. Vinton Schafer & Sons, Exelis, Inc., Kohls Distribution Center, APG Federal Credit Union, Bulle Rock Residence Club, EZ Shield, Harford County Public Library, It's PayDay, Slavie Federal Savings Bank, Welcome One Emergency Shelter, Walgreens (through The Kids in Need Foundation), TIC Gums, St. Mary's Episcopal Church, PNC Bank, and Sun Trust Bank.

“We are grateful for the support of businesses”, said Merlock, “especially in a year when more students need school supplies due to the current economic climate. We look forward to more businesses joining our efforts in coming years. Providing school supplies to the teachers to give to the students is the most effective way to ensure that every child receives what they need to participate in high quality learning”.

GEEF's *Tools for Schools* program has been using temporary space but is in need of a permanent location. Businesses interested in providing space or who would like to donate to the *Tools for Schools* resource center can contact Deb Merlock at 410-322-7743 or geefinc@gmail.com. School supplies are needed and collected year round.

For more information about GEEF, visit www.geefinc.com.

For more information about UWCM, visit www.uwcm.org.

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About GEEF

Greater Excellence in Education Foundation is a 501c3 charitable organization whose mission is to provide educational, social and fiscal resources to foster excellence in learning so all Harford County Public School students, with an emphasis on vulnerable students, can be successful in school, college, work, and life. For more information about GEEF, visit www.geefinc.com.

About UWCM

For nearly 90 years, United Way of Central Maryland (UWCM) has been the region's human service leader, encouraging all central Marylanders to give, advocate and volunteer. Its mission is to mobilize the community to improve people's lives. UWCM is dedicated to helping individuals and families living at or below 300 percent of the federal poverty level meet their basic needs, stabilize and achieve self-sufficient lives. By drawing upon local knowledge, data and expertise to understand the community's needs, UWCM is able to identify where gaps exist and concentrate on what works in addressing them – serving as a powerful advocate on critical health and human issues. UWCM supports programs and initiatives in the city of Baltimore and Anne Arundel, Baltimore, Carroll, Harford and Howard counties. For more information, visit www.uwcm.org.