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**OFFICE DEPOT FOUNDATION DONATES 5,000 BACKPACKS TO MAYOR BLOOMBERG'S ABSENTEEISM TASK FORCE; HELPS NEW YORK ELEMENTARY SCHOOL CHILDREN PREPARE FOR NEW SCHOOL YEAR**

**NEW YORK, N.Y., August 23, 2010** – For the past 10 years, the [Office Depot Foundation](#) – the independent charitable giving arm of Office Depot (NYSE: ODP) – has given hope to elementary school children in need across the United States through its award-winning National Backpack Program. Now, in a collaborative partnership with Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg, the Foundation has donated 5,000 backpacks to the City of New York to help in its efforts to get children to come to school – and to keep coming back.

The backpacks, which are being donated in collaboration with JanSport, will be distributed to 10 elementary schools that are working with the Mayor's Interagency Task Force on Truancy, Absenteeism and Engaging At-Risk Students at School. The donations were announced by Office Depot Foundation President Mary Wong at a press conference at PS345 in Brooklyn with Mayor Bloomberg and other key education and policy officials.

"When Mayor Bloomberg's office learned about our National Backpack Program and asked us to support this vitally important initiative, we were happy to assist," Wong said. "These backpacks not only help kids get ready for the new school year, but they truly bring hope and dignity to children whose families couldn't otherwise afford to equip them with this essential item."

The donations are part of the Foundation's National Backpack Program, which is celebrating its 10th anniversary this year. Office Depot and the Office Depot Foundation have given more than 2.3 million backpacks to children since the program began in 2001.

"We will be matching students who are most at-risk for attendance problems with a supportive school mentor, using data and community support groups in new ways, and reminding students and parents about the importance of going to school every day," Mayor Bloomberg said. "Office Depot Foundation is generously



supporting our efforts with 5,000 backpacks for students that attend the first day of school, as research shows starting off the school year on the right foot is a key to preventing chronic absences. Too many children miss too much school, and truancy is often a child's first step in the wrong direction. Students need to be in school: Every Student. Every Day.”

In addition to donating the backpacks, the Office Depot Foundation and the Mayor's office are exploring the potential introduction of the Foundation's "Dream UP Career Exploration Program" in New York middle schools. The program features a 16-week curriculum that enables students to look at career options and choices in an effort to keep them engaged in school and reduce the chance that they will drop out during – or before – high school.

To learn more, visit [www.officedepotfoundation.org](http://www.officedepotfoundation.org).

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### **About the Office Depot Foundation**

The Office Depot Foundation is an independent foundation (tax exempt under IRC Sec. 501(c)(3)) that serves as the independent charitable giving arm of Office Depot, Inc. In keeping with its mission, Listen Learn Care®, the Foundation supports programs that help children succeed in school and in life; enable non-profit organizations to become more efficient and effective; help people and businesses prepare for disasters, then recover and rebuild afterwards; strengthen communities through grants, product donations and volunteerism; and encourage community development through entrepreneurship and economic innovation. More information is available at [www.officedepotfoundation.org](http://www.officedepotfoundation.org). The Foundation is on Twitter at [www.twitter.com/OfficeDepotFndn](https://www.twitter.com/OfficeDepotFndn) and Facebook at [www.facebook.com/OfficeDepotFoundation](https://www.facebook.com/OfficeDepotFoundation).

