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## Samaritan House begins taking online donations

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Samaritan House made some big technological steps with its most recent school supply drive in hopes of better connecting those who can give with those who have need.

For the first time, the San Mateo-based nonprofit accepted online donations through an Amazon Wish List. Spokeswoman Marcy Spiker said the organization found that this allowed individuals to pay for an item that Samaritan House requested and have it shipped directly to the organization.

The wish lists are only available during Samaritan House's fundraising events.

Spiker said that this upcoming holiday season, Samaritan House will continue the online donations.

"It's a convenient way to do online shopping at the same time and not have to worry about the hassle," Spiker said. "We want to continue giving people options."

The charity has been running their back-to-school program for the past few years, spurred by clients who said back-to-school supplies were an added expense for them. Supplies to fill backpacks included pens, highlighters, rules, glue, scissors, calculators, crayons, binders, folders, paper, pencil sharpeners and pencil cases.

"We can take a little bit of a load off for back-to-school season," Spiker said.

This year, 222 children benefited from Samaritan House's annual back-to-school backpack giveaway, exceeding its goal of 200 backpacks with supplies. Client families that wished to receive free backpacks for their kids signed up for the distribution earlier in the summer and began picking up their packs this month.

Back-to-school donations were accepted throughout the summer from individual donors, businesses and community service organizations in the area. This season, the largest donations were received from donation drives conducted by Price Waterhouse Coopers in San Francisco and Western Hills Church in San Mateo.

Around 22 more backpacks were available this year compared with last year.

"Back-to-school is such an exciting time for these families, but many of our clients are faced with a challenge in providing these additional supplies when their budgets are already tight," said Robyn Fischer, client service supervisor, in a prepared statement. "By providing our client families with these backpacks and school supplies, we are equipping these children with the supplies they need to have a successful school year."

But the start of school doesn't mean the end of providing for needy students. Samaritan House is kicking off its Halloween Costume Drive after Labor Day and it will be looking for costume donations for youths up to age 14.

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Photo courtesy of the Samaritan House  
Alejandra, 9, and her brother Andres, 4, arrived at Samaritan House last week to receive backpacks filled with supplies to help them start their school year.