



PRESS RELEASE - FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Backpack Challenge Kicks Off in Philadelphia to support Youth in Foster Care

PHILADELPHIA, PA June 19, 2019 –The Philadelphia Department of Human Services (DHS) and Valley Youth House (VYH) will hold a Kickoff for the Backpack Challenge on June 19th at 2:00pm at The Achieving Independence Center, North Broad Street, Philadelphia PA 19122. The Backpack Challenge raises funds and collects essential back-to-school items for youth in foster care.

The Backpack Challenge aims to raise \$25,000 in addition to collecting 4,000 backpacks this year in Philadelphia. Monetary donations will be used to remove roadblocks for youth in foster care-in their pursuit of higher education by providing transportation, technology, tuition and other essentials. The event on Wednesday will feature speeches from AIC youth, Sean Brace from iHeart media and will be hosted by Power 99's Mutha Knows.

This year, 85 AIC members graduated high school. In total, 120 AIC members are enrolled in post-secondary programs, with approximately 52 youth enrolling for the first time this upcoming year. Fifteen youth students graduated from post-secondary programs.

"Making sure that youth have the school supplies they need to have a successful school year, is a great way to support children and youth throughout our City, and especially youth in foster care. Plus, a backpack filled with the right supplies will help youth feel prepared and excited for the new school year," said Cynthia Figueroa, DHS Commissioner.

In partnership with The Philadelphia Department of Human Services, iHeart Media, Power 99, Trinseo, Lincoln Financial, and Harmelin Media, the Backpack Challenge in its tenth year is also grateful to its new sponsors and collections sites including Evoke PR, Huntsworth Health Corporation, The Free Library of Philadelphia, Bickley's New Beginnings United Methodist Church and TD Bank.

Collection sites will be posted throughout the Philadelphia area from June 19 through August 15th. For more information on the Backpack Challenge please visit www.backpackchallenge.com.

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The Philadelphia Department of Human Services (DHS) is the county child welfare agency. We lead, support, coordinate and implement services to prevent and address child abuse and neglect; and operate juvenile justice programs for Philadelphia. www.phila.gov/dhs

VALLEY YOUTH HOUSE (VYH), founded in 1973, does more than just provide a home for Pennsylvania's vulnerable, abused and homeless youth. VYH partners with thousands of individuals each year to build a solid foundation for young people and their families. With dedicated housing, counseling, skills training, health, prevention and intervention services, VYH empowers resilient young people in establishing promising futures. For more information about Valley Youth House, visit www.valleyyouthhouse.org.

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