

Dallas warehouse that aids needy schools faces testing times

12:22 PM CDT on Sunday, July 19, 2009

By TAWNELL D. HOBBS / The Dallas Morning News
thobbs@dallasnews.com

Audrey Black is feeling the pinch of a tight economy as donations have slowed at the Mountain Creek warehouse she manages.



SONYA N. HEBERT/DMN

Audrey Black, who oversees The Storehouse in Mountain Creek, says she hopes to accommodate teachers from about 150 campuses serving mostly poor students in North Texas. 'The level of support has been reduced,' she says.

Black oversees The Storehouse, which provides donated items to needy schools and nonprofit organizations.

A component of the store is the Teacher Resource Center, where teachers can shop for free school supplies.

As the new school year approaches, Black is hoping to fill the many bins in the warehouse with donated school supplies to accommodate teachers from about 150 campuses serving mostly poor students in North Texas.

"The level of support has been reduced," she said Saturday. "Everything is needed."

The Teacher Resource Center, which operates from September to May, provides items from pencils to backpacks to deodorant. Teachers can even find decorations for their classrooms. Black said most of the products donated are surplus items from manufacturers.

World Vision, a Christian relief and development organization that teams up with communities to fight poverty, operates the Dallas store and eight others around the country.

Sherese Walker, a Cedar Hill ISD teacher coordinator, said teachers can easily spend \$500 to \$1,000 on supplies each school year.

She said students who don't have the required supplies become a target for teasing, an unpleasant way to start the school year.

"From Day One, students can already have a negative view of school if they're being teased," Walker said.

Dave Smith, executive director of the Kids in Need Foundation, said his group has increased awareness of the need for donations at The Storehouse and 22 others like it around the country.

The foundation is an affiliate member of the stores.

Smith said that since the first store opened in Chicago in 1997, more than \$300 million in products have been distributed through the stores. He said that Target is a national sponsor of the initiative and provides cash donations and products.

Black said not having supplies can be hard on teachers who want to provide for their students.

She said one teacher told her that she had spent about \$2,000 on supplies before her husband asked her to stop because they didn't have the money.

"I have had teachers actually cry when they pick products up," Black said. "Teachers need supplies to operate."