

## Foundation Holds Summit to Foster Growth, Awareness of National Network of Free Stores for Teachers

CHARLOTTE, N.C., June 23 /PRNewswire/ -- The 2003 U.S. Census indicates that the number of children living in poverty jumped from 12.1 million to 12.9 million between 2002 and 2003, its highest level in ten years. Couple that with the fact that the average family spends an estimated \$130 each year for new school supplies for each child(1), and it's clear that many Americans cannot afford to send their children to school with even basic supplies.

Figures like these are not going unnoticed.

The SHOPA Kids In Need Foundation is serving as an omnibus for a national network of resource centers where teachers from low-income school districts can access free school supplies for their students. Although organizations and community leaders have recognized the need to provide school supplies to low income schools, starting such an organization is a big task - which is where the Kids In Need Foundation comes in to complete the picture. The Foundation opened a dozen Kids In Need Resource Centers throughout the nation in the past eight years. During the same time, community-minded individuals were opening their own free stores in a number of different cities. In an effort to share best practices and simplify the process for others, the SHOPA Kids In Need Foundation formed the National Network. In 2004, independent free stores in St. Louis, Indianapolis, Phoenix, Tampa, Scarborough (ME), and Beaumont (TX) joined the National Network, bringing the total of Centers in the Network to 21 and adding more than 175,000 students to the more than one million children already being served.

On June 23-24, the founders, directors, staffs, and volunteers of these Centers are meeting at a National Network Summit in Charlotte, NC, hosted by Classroom Central, the local member of the Network. There, along with nearly a dozen individuals interested in spearheading new centers in their respective communities, administrators will share ideas and problem solving techniques that will promote growth in current centers and encourage the development of new ones.

Michael Gross, an associate with Anne Klein and Associates, is attending this year's Summit on behalf of Noramco Inc., which is planning to open a center in late fall of 2005. One of the goals of the Noramco Neighbors, a committee of community leaders in Wilmington, DE, is to raise the academic performance and to foster a better education environment for the area's youth. "It is our hope that a Kids In Need resource center will ensure that every Wilmington child in need has the quantity and quality of school supplies necessary to succeed in school. Noramco is looking forward to learning from the founders of other Kids In Need centers at this week's summit and partnering with Kids In Need to make this vision a reality."

Eight years ago, Gary Landwirth started a resource center in Orlando, FL, called A Gift For Teaching. This center has experienced significant growth and made a marked impression on its community. "There are many people who wish to start these grassroots, community-based projects but don't necessarily have the resources. By teaming with the Kids In Need Foundation and joining their National Network of Centers, these folks can find best practice information and receive support on a national scale.

"If someone in Poughkeepsie hears about one of the Resource Centers and wants to create something in their community, Kids In Need provides a mechanism to facilitate that activity," Landwirth added.

Now in its tenth year, the Foundation has a network of corporate sponsors, such as Target Stores, Office Depot, Rite Aid Corporation, OfficeMax, Inc., MeadWestvaco, and The Coca-Cola Company that work with the Foundation to provide financial and product support to the National Network. The Resource Centers also secure local donations from their respective communities. "The Centers cannot thrive without that community support," said Penny Hawk, program manager of the SHOPA Kids In Need Foundation. "Resource Centers that have sprung from the efforts of a few dedicated individuals are some of the most successful centers in the National Network. Kids In Need can be the conduit of information, product, and other resources, but it is the enthusiasm and hard work of people in the community that open the doors and see that the teachers and students get the supplies they need."

The SHOPA Kids In Need Foundation is a national non-profit organization providing school supplies to impoverished children and under-funded teachers. A 501(c)(3) charitable organization founded in 1995 by SHOPA, the School, Home, and Office Products Association, the Foundation's mission is to recognize, promote, and support initiatives that foster educational excellence. The Foundation supports 21 Kids In Need Resource Centers that allow

teachers from low-income schools to obtain free school supplies for their students. In addition, Kids In Need Teacher Grants provide K-12 educators with funding to provide innovative learning opportunities for students. Now in its tenth year, the SHOPA Kids in Need Foundation has distributed more than \$150 million in school supplies, directly benefiting 1.1 million students and 65,000 teachers annually. For more information, call 800-854-7467 or visit <http://www.kidsinneed.net>.

SHOPA, founded in 1991, is a nonprofit trade association representing nearly 1,200 manufacturers, manufacturer representatives, retailers, wholesalers, distributors, commercial/contract stationers, and service companies involved in the production, distribution, and sale of school supplies and office products. The Association also produces SBTS (SHOPA Buyer- to-Seller) Marketplace events, which facilitate pre-scheduled and one-on-one meetings. SHOPA, in cooperation with Messe Frankfurt, Inc. and PROPAPER, is producing Paperworld USA in November, the international trade event for the school, and office products industry. For more information, visit the Web site at <http://www.shopa.org>.

(1) SHOPA's 2004 Back-to-School Consumer Shopping Research, conducted by Management Ventures, Inc., found that households spent \$130.75 for school supplies in 2004.

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