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Bikers bring backpacks to needy children

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As a group of children waited in line in the morning sun, they heard the roaring of motorcycle engines, and all at once erupted into cheers. One by one, the bikers pulled into the parking lot, bringing much-needed supplies for the boys and girls returning to school.

The children were all residents of the Casas de la Vina housing complex at 23784 Avenue 9 in Madera, and on Saturday, they greeted Chapter 399 of the Star Touring and Riding Association.



COURTESY OF SONIA SANCHEZ

ABOVE — Members of Star Touring Riding Association Chapter 399 of Madera distribute nearly 100 backpacks to children from Casas de Vina.

RIGHT — Juan Maravilla holds the free backpack he received from Star Touring Riding Association Chapter 399 of Madera.



tion. This was done in cooperation with Self-Help Enterprises, a community housing organization that owns Casas de la Vina.

“We wanted a good way to make them feel confident about going back to school,” said Richard Heath, the president of Chapter 399. “They have some stuff to start school with— their pencils, calculators, erasers, rulers, and all that stuff. Otherwise, they would have nothing to start off the school year.”

Heath and his fellow bikers delivered 97 backpacks in total while in Madera.

“We do fundraisers
SEE BACKPACKS, PAGE B4

COURTESY OF
SONIA SANCHEZ
Members
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Backpacks

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throughout the year to get the funds to buy the backpacks, and buy the materials," said Helen Heath, Richard Heath's wife, and the secretary of the Madera chapter. "We did a swap meet, and a hotdog sale, and then we did a motorcycle ride to Pinnacles National Park, and other chapters donated at that time."

According to Roberto Garcia, the resource services coordinator for Self-Help Enterprises, the majority of the children that their organization represents come from low-income families. The backpacks and supplies, he said, were thus a significant boost to for the morale of the children.



COURTESY OF SONIA SANCHEZ

Children from Casas de Vina look through the backpacks they received from Members of Star Touring Riding Association Chapter 399 of Madera.

"We get so much joy out of seeing the happy faces on those kids," Garcia said. "I mean those smiles mean everything because we are doing a great service."

One of the children who was helped by Star Touring was Monica Ambrosio. Returning to school and starting the 7th grade on Thursday, she said that while she did not look forward to going back to the grind of school, she was happy with her new, turquoise backpack, which she held out in front of her.

"I picked it because it's a nice color," she smiled.

In addition to the backpacks received in Madera, Chapter 399 went up to perform another delivery in Del Rey for another complex run by Self-Help Enterprises later that day.