



Kate Rogriguez of Cognizant donated backpacks to Phil Ferguson, Suffolk Commonwealth Attorney, and Joan Turner, community outreach coordinator with the Commonwealth Attorney's Office.

Packing bags for success



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The Commonwealth's Attorney's Office in Suffolk regularly does outreach into the community, but during the COVID-19 pandemic, it's been limited but not stopped.

Kate Rodriguez, the senior global executive recruiter at Cognizant, posted on Nextdoor that the information technology consulting company had backpacks it wanted to donate to a charity that may need them to hand out. She was connected with Joan Turner, the community outreach coordinator for the Commonwealth's Attorney's Office, and donated 250 backpacks.

"This is awesome," said Rodriguez. "They are so dedicated in helping the community and the kids in it. You can really see their impact."

These donated backpacks will be filled with school supplies and handed out to various organizations the Commonwealth's Attorney's Office regularly partners with for donations. The bags will go to the Genieve Shelter, the Boys and Girls Club, ForKids and the Salvation Army in the coming weeks.

"After speaking with Ms. Rodriguez, Mr. Ferguson was very excited to reach out to these groups," said Turner. "We spoke with organizations with children in need for backpacks, whether it be for this next school year or now for those who are attending summer school."

The supplies included in these bags include pens, pencils, rulers and notebooks. The backpacks are plain black, full-sized with no logo, making them perfect for giving away to students regardless of gender or age.

Along with the school supplies, included is a goodie bag full of items from the Commonwealth's Attorney's Office that would be usually given out during their outreach events. These baggies include many items like a mini-football and a coloring book that have slogans to help educate youth and prevent crime.

"This is a big part of our community outreach," said Ferguson. "We do these preventive efforts to reduce their involvement with the criminal justice system. We hope to have a positive impact. It's what we're out here to do, educate and prevent."

In 2019, the Commonwealth's Attorney's Office did 136 speaking engagements. Even though these events have been canceled for the past year, the office still does what it can to safely engage.