

Officer gives back with school backpack giveaway

Jeff Morganteen, Staff Writer

Published: 08:55 p.m., Friday, August 20, 2010



FILE — Stamford police officer Jerry Junes talks to Kevin Parker during a meeting of Future Five in 2009. Photo: File Photo / Stamford Advocate File Photo

STAMFORD -- Jerry Junes received plenty of free backpacks growing up poor on Myrtle Avenue.

Now a Stamford police officer, Junes wants to give some back.

Junes helped the Stamford Police Association organize a book bag giveaway with the Salvation Army and First County Bank. It will be held from 9 a.m. to noon Saturday at two locations -- the Stamford Police Department at 805 Bedford St. and the Salvation Army at 198 Selleck St. Nearly 1,000 book bags will be given to disadvantaged children 16 and under who need backpacks before the new school year begins.

Junes, a Stamford native, said he used to collect backpacks and stuff them in the truck of his patrol car, handing them out to needy children while patrolling the West Side. The officer now works in the investigative division, but he still wanted to reach out to students from low-income families.

"I thought of having the kids come to me," Junes said. "It makes you feel good seeing a kid coming to school with a backpack you gave them."

The police union joined with the Salvation Army and First County Bank, which funded the project and helped buy the book bags, Junes said.

"With the economy and everything, he just figured it was a great way to help out some of the underprivileged kids," Stamford police union President Sgt. Joseph Kennedy said.

Kennedy said that Junes has a reputation for giving back to the community. He helped organized a coat drive and other programs, in addition to his own personal efforts.

"He didn't have to do any of this stuff," Kennedy said.

The backpacks will be given away on a first-come, first-serve basis. One will be given to each child. Hot dogs and burgers will be served during the giveaway.