



*Illustration by Elle Spicer, MassArt*

**The Backpacks  
Were Hung By The  
Chimney With  
Care...**

**Winter  
NEWSLETTER**

**December, 2024**

[Make A Gift](#)

## ***News to warm your heart!***

Since school commenced, there's been lots of uplifting happenings at School on Wheels! New Mentoring friendships and support groups have formed, tutoring sites have emphasized ESL learning, our 20th anniversary was celebrated - and we distributed a record number of customized, grade-level backpacks! We've unwrapped STEAM projects, field trips, and more!

[Read all about it!](#)

**BRIDGE MENTORING PROGRAM**



## The Power of Connection

SOWMA's Director of Bridge Mentoring Brittany O'Hare held a brunch for volunteer mentors and their mentees to congratulate recipients of Bill and Annmarie Harlor's Soaring Scholars scholarship program.

The brunch was delightful as students and mentors met - in person!

Introductions and tales of gratitude for the Scholarship Program turned into conversations about personal challenges of homelessness. Stories of hardship and triumph took center stage as gatherers chronicled their journey in a safe and comfortable setting.

"At times there wasn't a dry eye in the room," said O'Hare.

That's when O'Hare idea. She launched two separate support groups; one for volunteer mentors and the other for students in our high school and college Mentoring Program.

"It's been incredibly powerful," said O'Hare. "Friendships are created outside of SOWMA and the best part is that they know they're not alone," she added.

Other seminars unrolled this fall and winter included *Surviving Undergrad*, *Navigating Financial Aid*, and *Surviving the Holidays*.



## SAVE THE DATE *Recognizing Trauma* January 30, 2025

How does childhood trauma present itself; and how do those signs differ from anxiety, depression or another condition?

Join Dr. Michelle Alto, Psychologist for Harvard Medical School's Baker Center for Children and Families, on a SOWMA-sponsored Zoom seminar from 6 - 7 p.m. on January 30th.

Dr. Alto works with youth and families in home, school, outpatient, and pediatric settings.

She received her B.A. in Psychology from Middlebury College and her Ph.D. in Clinical Psychology from the University of Rochester. She completed her pre-doctoral internship at the Medical University of South Carolina

This seminar is free and open to all as we begin the New Year filled with hope, empathy and acquaintance. Watch for details or email [mal@sowma.org](mailto:mal@sowma.org)

[Learn About Mentoring](#)

## TUTORING NEWS



### English Language Learners

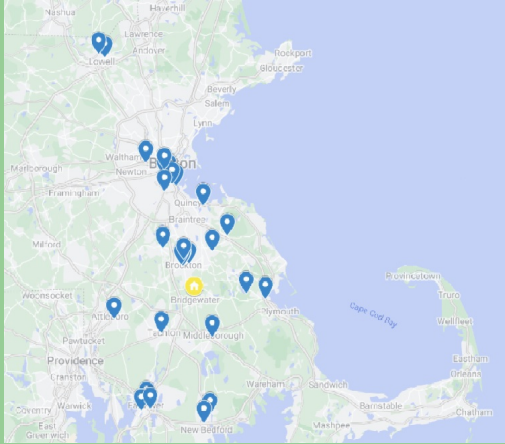
Imagine yourself in class or doing homework while simultaneously learning a new language.

As public schools take on the challenge of embracing a record number of ESL (English as a Second Language) students, our volunteer tutors are there to help.

Thanks to a generous grant, Pocketalk devices were purchased to aid English learners. The handheld device, with translation capacity in 82 languages, support not only students and tutors, but parents and site staff as well.

Education Director Jonathan Vincent said, "Children are sponges and pick up language acquisition quickly. These devices dramatically improve communication

among tutors, students, and families - and eliminates frustration and shame." Vincent has also appointed bilingual site coordinators, who oversee tutoring sessions, in Boston, Kingston, Lowell, and New Bedford.



## Our Tutoring Sites are Snowballing!

As we bid adieu to our 20th anniversary and celebratory year, we can't help but marvel at how our mission has resonated and taken hold in new communities!

From our origins in 2004 at 2 Brockton family shelters, today our Tutoring Program is making an impact across 15 cities and town throughout the Commonwealth. Tutoring locations now operate in *Attleboro, Boston, Brockton, Fall River, Kingston, Lowell, Marshfield, Middleboro, Norwell, New Bedford, Plymouth, Rockland, Stoughton, Taunton, and Weymouth.*

[Learn About Tutoring](#)

## BACKPACKS & TOOLS FOR SCHOOL

**From 50 to 11,000!**



All year long we prepare for the New Year - that is, the new school year!

We've long believed that a child who arrives at school with a new backpack filled with customized, grade-level school supplies, walks in with confidence and a sense of belonging.

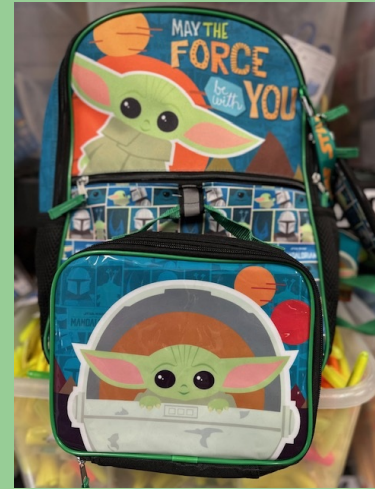
For children and youth sharing one room with their family at a shelter, hotel or transitional housing, a backpack serves as a personal and private locker.

Add an age-appropriate book and personal note of inspiration and you have all

the makings for success! Thanks so much to all who helped make this possible.

We receive requests all year long and are always in need of supplies. See the list of needs that are always welcome [HERE](#)

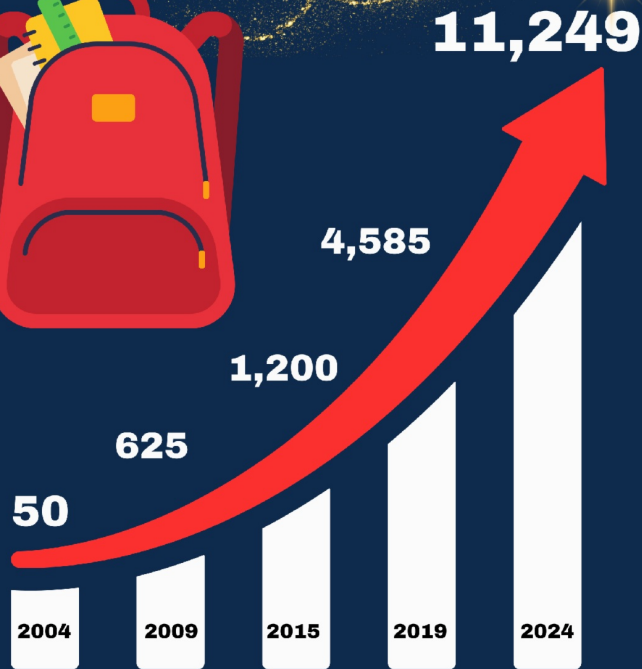
**Plus, ours are FUN!**



**All 11,000 of them!**

# Backpacks & Tools for School

Students Served Annually



**Winter Warmth & Wellness!**

FOR KIDS IMPACTED BY HOMELESSNESS

Help thaw the winter chill by donating to SOWMA's Winter Warmth & Wellness bags for students facing homelessness.

**ITEMS NEEDED**

- Cozy Blankets
- Hats and Gloves
- Warm Socks
- Hand Sanitizer
- Books (K-12) on Health, Nutrition & Mindfulness
- School supplies (pencils, pens, erasers, crayons)

**Contact for drop off**  
schoolwheels@sowma.org  
100 Laurel St. East Bridgewater, MA 02333  
508-587-9091  
WWW.SOWMA.ORG

Scan & Deliver



## WINTER, WARMTH & WELLNESS

Things are heating up as we collect all things warm and wonderful this winter for distribution to families living at our partnering sites.

It's not too late to get involved as we distribute these items in January after the holiday rush.

Check out the items needed and consider donating your favorite wellness book, a cozy blanket, fuzzy socks - or hats and a mitten - or two : )

Send Some Warmth

# DONOR SPOTLIGHT

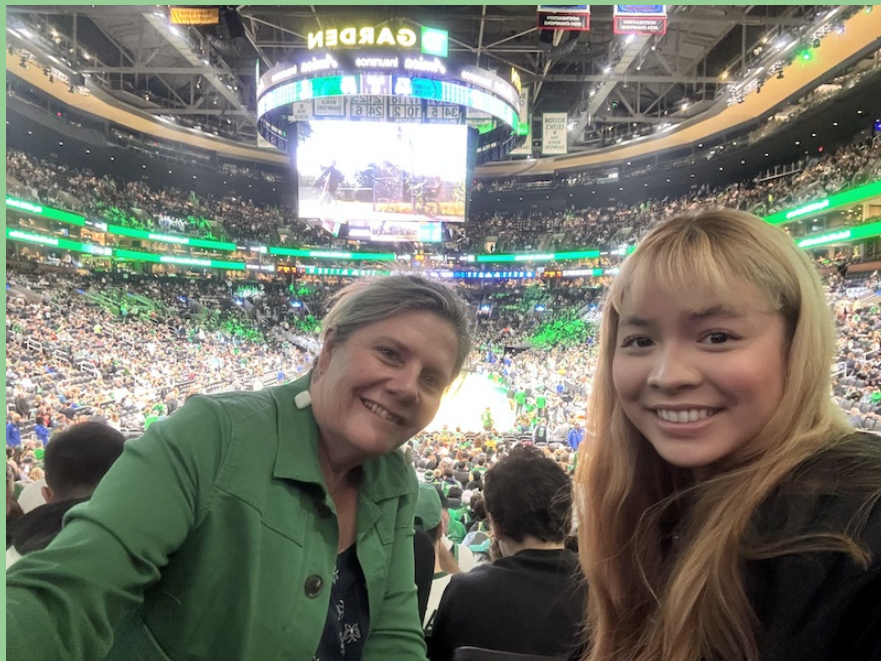


Many thanks to the *Dave McGillivray Finish Strong Foundation* for supporting our Tutoring Program! Dave and his Foundation have a unique vision that combines physical fitness with literacy - what a winning combination!

We are so grateful and excited to announce this partnership, which will help bolster the literacy component of our tutoring program. This gift is especially timely as we see more students reading below grade-level and an influx of English language learners.

With this and many other growing growing literacy challenges, we salute Dave and his colleagues for helping to ensure all students are in great shape and reading ready. Thank you!

For information visit: [davemcgillivrayfoundation.org](http://davemcgillivrayfoundation.org)



Hats off to The Boston Celtics' Shamrock Foundation, who gifted tickets to a recent C's game as part of their annual *Shamrock Dreams Program*.

The program affords season ticket holders the opportunity to donate tickets to be passed along to mentors, mentees and other community members who might not otherwise have the opportunity to see the G.O.A.T.\* in action!

Mentor student Mint and her Mentor Jen were all smiles at the Garden last week as the team played for the win! \* GOAT is the acronym used for Greatest of All Time

## Grants & Foundations Inquiries

# VOLUNTER SPOTLIGHT



## Insuring The Future for Kids!

When Jeff Haight, Head of HR and Corporate Services at Intact Specialty Solutions, set out to find a local nonprofit to support, he turned to Google.

Little did he know, his search would lead to a game-changing partnership with School on Wheels.

Jeff and his team at this global insurance powerhouse were determined to make a meaningful, lasting impact on their local community — and School on Wheels was the perfect match.

Since then, Jeff and his colleagues have organized supply drives that have supported over 1,000 students, generously sponsored fundraisers and appeals, and let's not forget when they "Brought on the Dogs" at our annual Run, Walk & Wag for Kids!

In addition to his team's remarkable support, he also joined our Board of Directors as Vice Chair, volunteering his time and leadership skills to effect change at an even higher level.

Meet Jeff and see the incredible work he's doing for kids in our communities by clicking on a photo!





## STAY ON TOP OF HAPPENINGS

*Follow us on social media! [Instagram](#) [Facebook](#) [LinkedIn](#)  
[TikTok](#) X [YouTube](#)  
[Linktree](#)*

- **Tutoring Site Locations:** Attleboro, Boston, Brockton, Dorchester, Fall River, Kingston, Lowell, Marshfield, Middleboro, New Bedford, Norwell, Plymouth, Rockland, Stoughton, Taunton, Weymouth
- **Backpacks:** 11,000+ students this school year will receive new, customized backpacks, books and "Tools for School"
- **90 Students** are now receiving support through our Bridge Mentoring Program

## MAKE A YEAR-END DONATION!



**SCHOOL**  
**on**WHEELS  
MASSACHUSETTS

Educate Kids  
Empower Families  
End Homelessness

The mission of School on Wheels of Massachusetts is to support the academic, social and emotional growth of students impacted by homelessness and poverty.

Make A Year-End Gift Today!

[Visit Our Website](#)

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02333 US

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