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For the Kid president **Alex Wan** (far right) says Backpack in the Park is 'an afternoon well spent.'

## Giving Backpack Backpack in the Park helps needy kids go back to school

By [ROB BECK](#)  
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FOR THE KID in All of Us, the nonprofit organization behind the popular Toy Party, is gearing up to present its second annual back to school benefit, Backpack in the Park, on July 28 in Piedmont Park's Magnolia Hall.

For the Kid president Alex Wan describes the event as more informal than the holiday-oriented Toy Party, and says it is set to include outdoor activities like an inflatable jumping tent for the kids and a mechanical bull for the adults.

In lieu of an admission price, attendees are asked to bring a new backpack filled with variety of back to school supplies or a gift card worth at least \$30, which will be donated to disadvantaged school children in and around Atlanta. A complete list of necessary supplies can be found on For the Kid's website.

According to Wan, the idea for Backpack in the Park, first held last summer, grew out of

watching the success of the Toy Party, which began in 2003 and similarly asks attendees to bring a new toy as the price of admission.

“After three years under our belt of the Toy Party, we realized the community was responding to these children’s parties,” says Wan. “We had heard about these type of events across the country, not just for gay events but similar school supply events, and thought that the same spirit from the Toy Party might translate well to such an event.”

If the more than 500 backpacks and gift cards donated at last year’s Backpack event is any testimony, the spirit appears to translate fairly well.

Wan says that Backpack and Toy Party each provides a similar sense of instant gratification with regards to viewing the results immediately.

“Everybody can every so often glance over at the results of the event and see exactly what you’ve done and not have to wait for weeks or months until the results come out,” he says. “You know right then and there that there’s a big stack of backpacks.”

**THIS YEAR’S BACKPACK** in the Park adds City Schools of Decatur and CHRIS Kids to the list of beneficiaries, which also includes returning beneficiary the Atlanta Public Schools.

Though CHRIS Kids has been a beneficiary of Toy Party since the event’s inception in 2003, this is the first year that it will receive donations from Backpack in the Park.

“CHRIS Kids has always been a great organization in our community,” Wan says. “We did not even realize they had a backpack effort in their summer, so it just made sense as far as a partnership is concerned.”

It’s a partnership that also made sense to Kevin Lynch, CHRIS Kids director of external affairs.

“Since we had already spent years building and growing our partnership [with For the Kid], it just seemed like a really natural fit to take this next step,” says Lynch.

Working with beneficiaries like CHRIS Kids allows For the Kid to accomplish its goals, which Wan says are twofold.

“[We set out to] help kids who need backpacks,” he says, “but the other part, which is just as important to us, is to bring members of our community together and turning around and reaching out to the broader Atlanta community with this donation. To the extent that we’re meeting both parts of that, that’s how we measure our success.”