



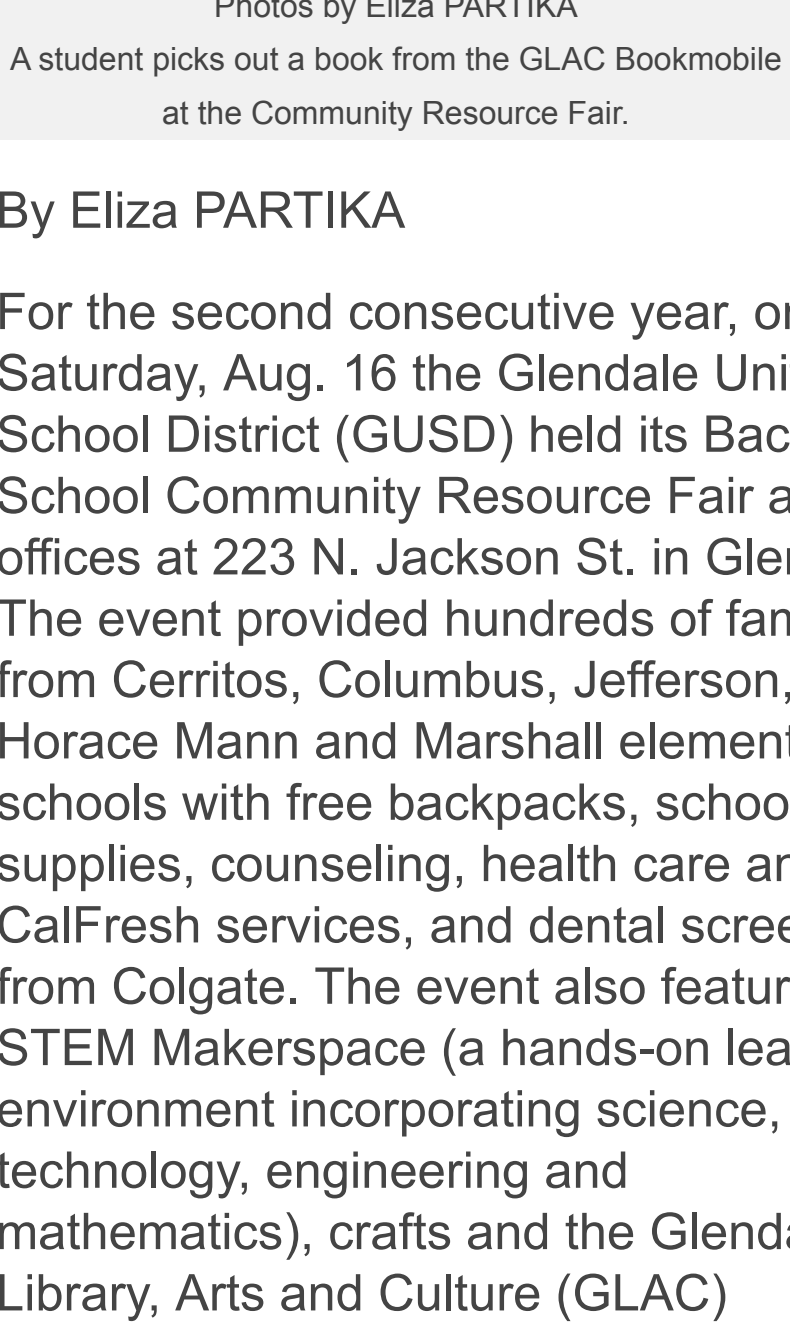
CRESCENTA VALLEY WEEKLY

THE FOOTHILLS COMMUNITY NEWSPAPER



GUSD Provides Resources for Students Ahead of Back to School

By CV Weekly on August 24, 2025 · 0 Comments



Photos by Eliza PARTIKA

A student picks out a book from the GLAC Bookmobile at the Community Resource Fair.

By Eliza PARTIKA

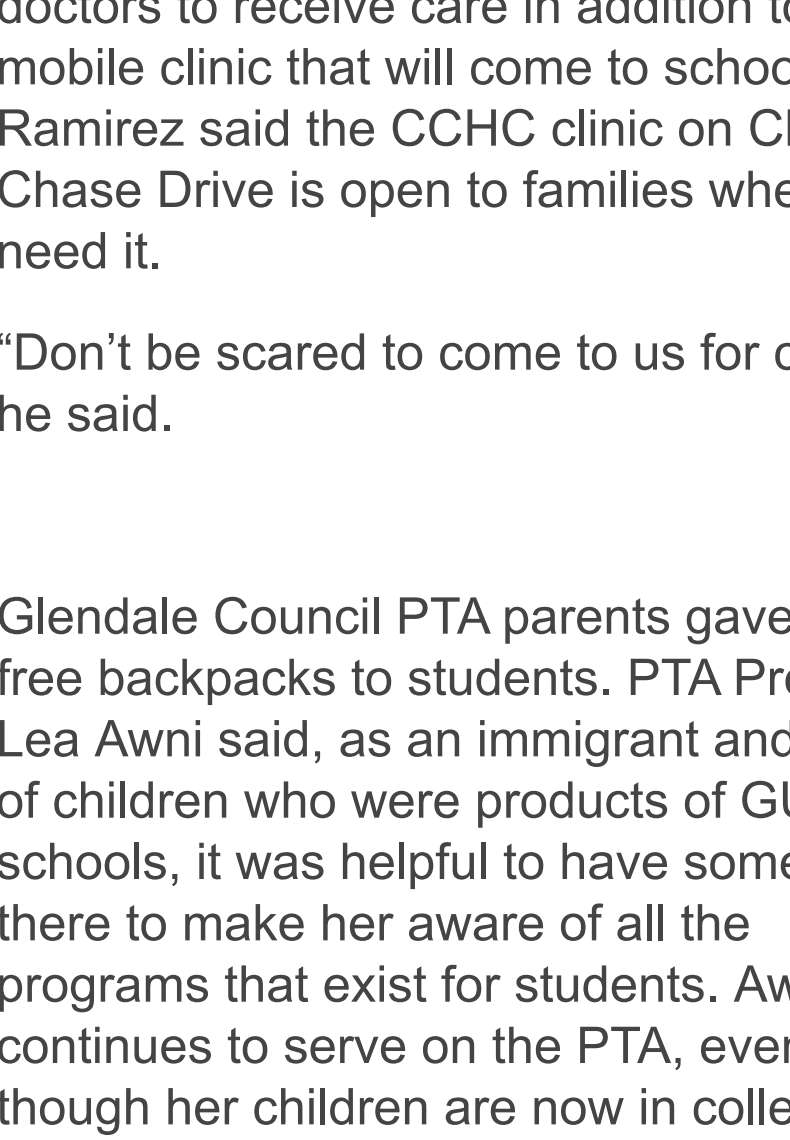
For the second consecutive year, on Saturday, Aug. 16 the Glendale Unified School District (GUSD) held its Back to School Community Resource Fair at its offices at 223 N. Jackson St. in Glendale. The event provided hundreds of families from Cerritos, Columbus, Jefferson, Horace Mann and Marshall elementary schools with free backpacks, school supplies, counseling, health care and CalFresh services, and dental screenings from Colgate. The event also featured a STEM Makerspace (a hands-on learning environment incorporating science, technology, engineering and mathematics), crafts and the Glendale Library, Arts and Culture (GLAC) Bookmobile.

Rose d'Amato, coordinator of GUSD Community Schools, said she goes out into the community to find resources that best fill the gaps for local families to ensure the District can “provide as many services as we can to get kids school-ready.”



A Glendale PTA volunteer helps a student pick out a backpack.

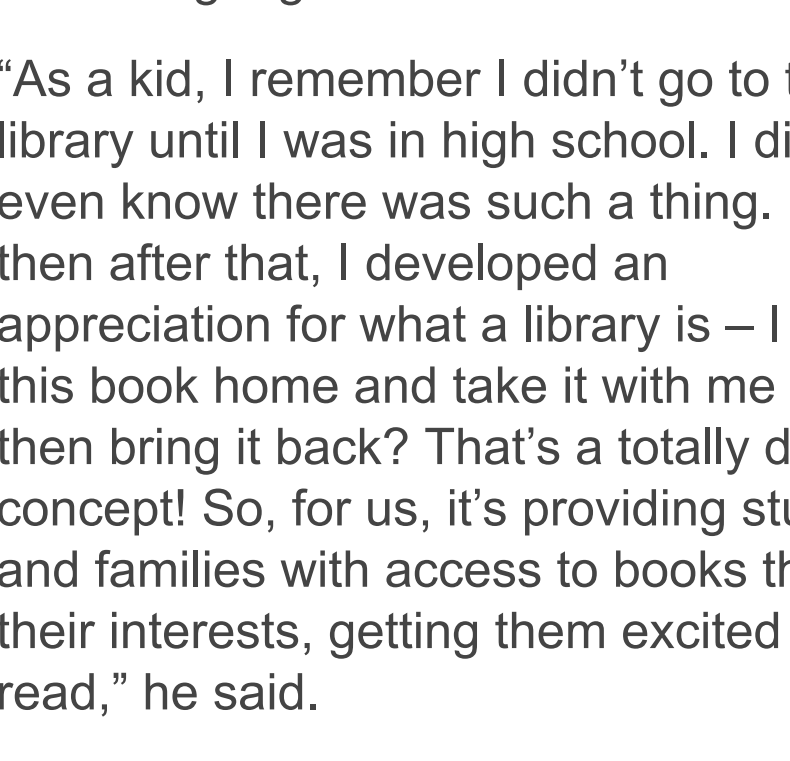
D'Amato begins planning the event six or seven months in advance, surveying families for what they need, connecting with community organizations and making sure families are aware of the event. After last year's turnout of around 500 families, d'Amato said there was a lot of positive feedback that helped design which resources would be present again this year. She estimated attendance tripled at this year's event, and hopes next year the resource fair can be filled with even more supplies.



A student demonstrates proper flossing at the Colgate booth.

“Families are so grateful that they are able to have these resources,” said d'Amato.

Nina Trujillo, a representative for the District's newest partner, Colgate's Bright Smiles Bright Futures oral health program, said Colgate will be bringing its mobile dental clinic to all GUSD elementary schools to provide health education and dental checkups to children 12 and under.



“[Bright Smiles Bright Futures] wants to make sure it can collaborate with [GUSD elementary schools] to provide this free service to families. We want [students] to develop good oral hygiene, to have good oral health, because everything enters through our mouth. We want them to understand that whatever goes into your mouth goes through your entire body. The Community Schools program is meant to serve families that really need these resources,” Trujillo said.

Longtime partners like Pedro Ramirez, director of Outreach & Community Engagement for Comprehensive Community Health Centers (CCHC), said his passion is to provide students and parents with what they need to maintain their health and thrive. CCHC brings its mobile clinic to all elementary school campuses to provide immunizations and health screenings for GUSD students.

“My commitment is to provide [families] with information, to save lives,” he said. “I want to show families they have a medical home here.”

Ramirez said families can also utilize tele-health video calls and phone calls with doctors to receive care in addition to the mobile clinic that will come to schools. Ramirez said the CCHC clinic on Chevy Chase Drive is open to families when they need it.

“Don't be scared to come to us for care,” he said.

Glendale Council PTA parents gave away free backpacks to students. PTA President Lea Awni said, as an immigrant and parent of children who were products of GUSD schools, it was helpful to have someone there to make her aware of all the programs that exist for students. Awni continues to serve on the PTA, even though her children are now in college, because of the powerful impact it makes with the resources and events the PTA arranges throughout the year.

“We want to make sure we provide [students] with the best tools to succeed. As a parent, I am thrilled to offer support in any way we can. When we are together, supporting our students, we make a positive impact on families, especially of incoming students, when they see all that is happening here. We make a difference when we get together with a vested interest in our students,” Awni said.

The GLAC Bookmobile made an appearance at the resource fair to provide kids with free books to start their school year. Eric Gomez, an outreach coordinator with the library, said literacy is vital to accessing a good education.

“As a kid, I remember I didn't go to the library until I was in high school. I didn't even know there was such a thing. But then after that, I developed an appreciation for what a library is – I take this book home and take it with me and then bring it back? That's a totally different concept! So, for us, it's providing students and families with access to books that fit their interests, getting them excited to read,” he said.

Rosa Hohman, board member of Kiwanis Club of the Verdugos, said Kiwanis has held a longtime partnership with Al Barro Foundation to support families in need. At the Community Schools Resource Fair volunteers from the Al Barro Foundation, with the help of Kiwanis volunteers, gave away clothing, shoes, pens, markers and other school supplies.

“We believe that our mission is to help one child at a time and to come to serve. This really helped our local community,” Hohman said. “There are so many families here who really need it. We thank the families for their patience today [with the crowds].”

The event reflected an immediate impact as students and families left the District parking lot, arms heaped with boxes of new shoes, books, bags of school supplies like markers and pencils, new backpacks and fun crafts.

“We were overwhelmed with all the stuff [the Community Schools Resource Fair] had this year,” said one parent.

Latisha Perkins, a parent who works at Cerritos Elementary and whose daughter attends fourth grade there, said she wasn't aware of the event last year but was glad she stopped by this year to gather supplies.

“It really helps me out because I'm a single mom, so it's really hard to figure out what I'm going to spend the little bit of money I have on, and now I don't have to worry about school supplies because it's already taken care of,” Perkins said.

School board member Kathleen Cross, who also attended the event, said she is inspired seeing the kids get excited about going back to school and picking out their school supplies.

“The kids come up and it's like, ‘What color backpack do you want and what color book do you want, what color pencil?’ And their little faces light up. They learn best when they feel good and they get choices. It's not just like a preset; this is what's going to be shoved upon you. They have all these different booths and all these different choices that they can make throughout [the event] and then they get to be proud – ‘I'm proud of my backpack, and I'm proud of my pencils. I picked those out.’ So it's giving them ownership over the tools that they're going to use to learn,” Cross said.

Superintendent Darneika Watson said she is excited to see the resources at use during the school year that students receive at these events.

“Our students and families are truly the beneficiaries of our work, so there's nothing more exciting than to see them happy, to see them celebrated, and to see them receive what they need,” Watson said.

D'Amato said she will continue to reach out to community partners around Glendale and that her office is open to feedback from families, to help improve the resources that are being provided and targeting the areas of greatest need.

For questions and feedback about resources, she encourages parents to contact her office via email or by calling the District office. Community members can find d'Amato's contact information at <https://www.gusd.net/communityschools>.

“We're not only building partnerships within the city, we're building partnerships with our families as well,” D'Amato said. “They are our partners in the work that we do. And again – we're only as good as the people we serve.”

Eliza PARTIKA

GUSD Provides Resources for Students Ahead of Back to School added by CV Weekly on August 24, 2025
[View all posts by CV Weekly →](#)

