

Parrot Heads spread some school spirit in backpack giveaway at Altonized Community Federal Credit Union

by Madelaine Gerard, Staff Writer
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ALTON - Starting the school year just got a whole lot easier for some lucky students around the Riverbend **Saturday** morning.

The Parrot Heads of the Riverbend and **Altonized Community Federal Credit Union** joined together to ensure that 200 children around the region would not go without school supplies and a brand new backpack on the first day of class.

Volunteers and members of the community organization arrived at the Altonized location at **4435 North Alby St.** to see find a line of kids and their families prepared to receive one of 200 free backpacks at **9 a.m.**

Michelle Hilligoss, wife of Parrot Head of the Riverbend co-founder **Kevin Hilligoss**, and her husband helped pass out the backpacks all morning and was happy to see the turn out.

"There's a lot of kids here that really need a book bag," Hilligoss said. "We thought this would be a great thing to do. We've had a real great outpouring of Altonized members who had a drop box here and we ourselves collected from our membership. We hope everybody comes and takes them all."



The packs were filled to the brim with all of the items that students may possibly need to kick off the school year, including pencils, pens, loose leaf paper and spiral notebooks, binders, glue sticks, rulers, erasers, folders, crayons, markers, colored pencils and much, much more.

“Most people think of school supplies as just another necessity in August, but for some, it’s another burden if they don’t have extra money to spend on them,” Altonized Community Federal Credit Union's President **Jennifer Spangler** said. “This will help relieve some of that burden and put a smile on a child’s face when they get their new backpack and school supplies.”

The Parrot Heads of the Riverbend have been serving the community since they became a sanctioned chapter of the Parrot Heads in Paradise group. The members, who are huge fans of musician **Jimmy Buffet**, organize events to raise awareness and funds for local organizations like the **Boys and Girls Club of Bethalto**, **Senior Citizens Plus**, area pet pantries, first responders, veterans and others in need.

"We became an official chapter of the Parrot Heads in Paradise in November 2010," Hilligoss said. "We're Jimmy Buffet fans, of course. We love his music, the tropical lifestyle, we all want to be on the beach somewhere but the reality is, we're here in the midwest. What we do here is try to leave where we are locally a little better than what we found it."

In the event that all 200 backpacks were not given away before **11 a.m.**, the group are to donate the remaining bags and supplies to the Boys and Girls Club of Bethalto. On Aug 20, the group will be holding a **Crazy Bowl** fundraiser at **Airport Bowl** in **Bethalto**. All proceeds from the fundraiser will go to benefit the club.

Altonized Community Federal Credit Union holds several events throughout the year to give back to the community in whatever way possible. Most recently, the financial institution held their annual **Hot Dog Day and Safety Fair** to acquaint area families with first responders, law enforcement and to celebrate one of America's favorite summer dish.

