



September 13, 2022

Chamber Members,

For the past three months, we have shared the need for mentors in our schools. I'm proud to see how our community has stepped up to the plate to get involved. Local mentoring programs have seen dramatic increases in volunteers and we continue to knock out those waitlists. It's not too late to become a mentor, if you'd like more information on the school based mentoring programs we have shared, visit [panamacity.org/mentor](http://panamacity.org/mentor).

However, mentoring is not the reason for my letter today. Over the last few months, I've had a lot of conversations with business, community and school leaders regarding education and needs in our schools. Many of us can afford to purchase school supplies and clothing for our children as well as make donations or contributions to our children's schools, but there are many who are unable to do so. I asked Bay District Schools for a list of needs at schools that truly need the help.

***I am asking you today to consider helping these schools meet the needs listed below.***

- Walmart gift cards so schools can purchase shoes and clothing for students in need, classroom supplies or snacks for hungry students.
- Clothing, shoes, backpacks and lunchboxes. All sizes needed for elementary, middle and high school students.
- Area rugs for classroom reading centers.
- Help replenish classroom supplies.
- Items for calm down corner in classrooms (fidgets, small toys, etc.)
- Items to help with adult staff morale – coffee, snacks, small gifts or gift cards, etc.
- Monetary donations to cover field trip costs for students in need throughout the year and to purchase school t-shirts for students in need.
- Monetary donation to help high school seniors attend their senior trip: the cost of bus transportation has increased by over \$2500.

I have to admit, it was hard to read the list provided to me. "Snacks for hungry students" was listed by several schools. "Money to help students who don't have field trip money throughout the year" was another need stated. One principal said, "We have a never-ending need for clothing and shoes. Families up here don't have a lot of money to shop, nor do they have the gas to go into town to redeem gift cards." In addition, "The cost of bus transportation has increased by over \$2500 for our senior trip. Our sponsor is looking for ways to offset this cost and she's worried that kids won't be able to afford to participate. We always try to keep the cost of the trip around \$400 but the increase would cause a substantial increase."

**If you would like to fulfill any of these needs, please contact Aimee Bright, [aimee@baychamberfl.com](mailto:aimee@baychamberfl.com) and she will get you connected with the appropriate school's POC.**

You've heard me say it before, the Chamber believes business and community involvement in the school system is critical to our youth. We have to continue to work together to positively impact our public schools. The children in our community deserve it.

I thank each of you for helping us Build A Better Bay County,

Chairman  
Bay County Chamber of Commerce