

Richmond Confidential

Richmond's kids get free school supplies



Supervisor John Gioia hands out scholastic grab bags at Verde Elementary. (Photos by David Ferry)

By: [David Ferry](#) | *September 10, 2010*

Three hundred schoolchildren at Verde Elementary School in North Richmond received free school supplies yesterday, courtesy of a local nonprofit and the federal stimulus bill.

The kids were the first of about 13,000 students in low-income West Contra Costa communities to receive bags of supplies, which included everything from pencils and calculators to watercoloring kits. Verde was chosen as the kickoff site for Contra Costa County because 100 percent of the students there qualify for free or reduced price meals.



A second grader checks out her new school supplies.

K to College, the Oakland-based nonprofit that organized the giveaway, says that over 19,000 children from low-income families in the West County attend public schools without necessary supplies. Benito Delgado-Olson, the company's executive director, said that his organization is dedicated to giving these kids a leg up, and will hand out 150,000 free supply kits around the Bay Area this fall.

At Verde yesterday, Delgado-Olson told an assembled group of first and second graders to make good use of their new supplies.

"Above all, remember that these school supplies are not a handout — these are the supplies that you deserve," he said.

Destiny, 7, a second grader at the assembly, said she was happy with her kit.

"Oh my gosh, water pencils!" she said. "When I get home I'm gonna wet these!"

While K to College organized the program and handed out the kits, much of the funding came from the federal government. The Contra Costa County Board of Supervisors received \$2.6 million from the Federal Stimulus Act to boost the program this year, which allowed a total of 40,000 children across the county to get free kits.

Supervisor John Gioia, who represents Richmond and much of the west county, said he and the board were just trying to "put everybody on an equal footing."