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Vouchers to help struggling families

THE Southern Highlands Foundation (formerly Wingecarribee Community Foundation) is teaming with Wingecarribee Family Support service, Highlands Community Centre, Stafford Cottage and Rainbow of the Southern Highlands to help families in need with back-to-school costs.

The foundation has received 364 Target and Big W vouchers from the Foundation for Rural and Regional Renewal (FRRR) and the Sidney Myer Fund Back to School Program, supported by the Sidney Myer Fund, the Bennelong Foundation and DOXA Foundation.

The Wingecarribee Family Support Service, Highlands Community Centre, Stafford Cottage, and Rainbow of the Southern Highlands are now distributing the \$50 vouchers to high-need families in the Southern Highlands.

In 2008 the Board of the Southern Highlands Foundation

took part in the Back to School Challenge Grant and raised an extra \$1500 towards the program.

FRRR matched these funds and, with a discount from Target stores, an extra 64 vouchers worth \$3200 will also be given out this year.

In total, \$18,200 worth of vouchers are being distributed in the local area.

The vouchers give specific help with school uniforms and school needs. They are not used for any other purpose.

"The Foundation appreciates the support of its patron Paul Ramsay and other supporters in achieving this goal," said Helen Saville of the Southern Highlands Foundation.

"It's a really worthwhile charity as each \$25 raised becomes worth \$50 through the matching grant, and all donations are tax deductible.

"It can cost more than \$2000 on average per year to send a

child to a public primary school, and that is a great deal for low-income families or families with special needs."

Ms Saville said the 2009 Back to School program was an excellent example of how a community group like the Southern Highlands Foundation could form partnerships with national charitable organisations to benefit the entire shire.

The program has been running since 2005 and has helped many appreciative families each year.

The Southern Highlands Foundation will raise extra funds for the Back to School Program again during 2009.

To enquire about making a donation to the next Back to School Challenge grant for winter school uniforms, phone the Foundation staff and volunteers on 4862 1466 or email info@wingecarribeecommunity.org.au.



HELPING HAND: Donna Crawford from Wingecarribee Family Support, Nikki McAdoo of Stafford Cottage and Helen Saville of the Southern Highlands Foundation with back-to-school vouchers for needy families.

Photo by Roy Truscott