



A program of the Education Foundation~Osceola County

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

BELK GETS A+ FOR SHARING \$5,000 TO GIVE NEEDY STUDENTS BASIC SCHOOL SUPPLIES

March 10, 2008—Kissimmee, FL: The new Belk department store opened at The Loop West in style with great discounts, new styles, and most importantly, a \$5,000 grant awarded to A Gift For Teaching of Osceola County (AGFT-O), a program of the Education Foundation~Osceola County. The funds will be used to purchase basic school supplies including crayons, pencils, paper, glue, and backpacks that will be distributed to the more than 57% of students in Osceola County who cannot afford lunch, much less basic school supplies. To fill this gap, many teachers are spending more than \$1,000 out of their own pockets to help provide for the increasing number of students in their classrooms who simply cannot afford crayons to color pictures, pencils to practice creative writing, or even age-appropriate books to read.

What is wonderful about partnering with community organizations like Belk, Inc., is that A Gift For Teaching of Osceola County is empowered to continue providing basic school supplies, as well as transferring the community's surplus merchandise and supplies, at no charge, into the hands of teachers and students in need. It is estimated that 250 families are living in motels along HWY 192, and that more than 800 children in Osceola County are homeless. Belk's generous contribution will help AGFT-O provide the basic tools these children need and deserve in order to succeed in school and life.

As a family-founded and operated corporation, Belk, Inc. has a long-standing tradition of community involvement and believes in being an active and caring corporate citizen by giving back to the communities they serve. The Belk Foundation's legacy of giving totals more than \$21 million over the past 10 years with more than 59% contributed to education purposes. AGFT-O has been serving Osceola teachers since 2004, distributing more than \$4.2 million in products back to teachers and students in need. To donate, volunteer, or learn more about AGFT-O, call 407-348-2370 or email Marcie Hill at hillm@osceola.k12.fl.us.

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The **Education Foundation-Osceola County** is a non-profit organization dedicated to supporting public education, teachers and students. Led by a 35 member board of directors, the Foundation currently awards over one-hundred thirty \$2,000 scholarships each year to Osceola County graduates. Other important accomplishments include matching children with mentors through the Take Stock in Children and Bookmark Buddies programs, providing classroom supplies to needy students and eligible teachers at no cost through a teacher free store, as well as providing classroom project grants and hosting special appreciation events for Osceola County educators and students. Visit our Web site at www.foundationosceola.org for more information about A Gift For Teaching of Osceola County or the Education Foundation~Osceola County.

A Gift For Teaching is a Central Florida non-profit organization that serves 325 public schools in Orange, Osceola and Seminole Counties. The Free Store in Orlando and its satellite store, A Gift For Teaching of Osceola County, are funded and stocked by local individuals and companies in the local community. To date, more than \$30 million worth of school supplies, including essential classroom tools such as pencils, notebooks, glue, backpacks, art supplies and books have been distributed to local students in need.