



## **Sing Sing Correctional Facility's Back to School Giveaway October 16, 2014**

During August and September 2014, the inmate organizations at Sing Sing Correctional Facility held a Back to School Giveaway in the facility's visiting room. This is the 7<sup>th</sup> year that this project has taken place at the facility. Over \$5,000 was raised from inmate organizations and from individual inmates donating funds for the Back to School Giveaway this year alone. In the visiting room, an area was set up where over 250 children visiting the facility could choose from a variety of backpacks full of supplies to take home with them. The backpacks were full of glue sticks, notebooks, pens, pencils, binders, rulers, and calculators. Each day, happy children were seen leaving the visiting room proudly displaying their new backpacks.

Not only did this project impact the lives of the families and friends who visited the facility, it also provided a service to needy families in the community. The Back to School committee raised enough funds to send boxes full of backpacks and supplies to several local family shelters.

Since 2008, the Back to School fund has raised up to \$10,000 annually to conduct three yearly projects; the Back to School giveaway of school supplies, the Thanksgiving Gift Giveaway of children's hats, gloves, and scarves, and the Black History Month Giveaway of children's books. Because of the generosity of the inmate population at Sing Sing over the last seven years, they have been able to send supplies to Bedford Hills Correctional Facility, Taconic Correctional Facility, Children of Promise, No Kids Left Behind, the Dean Street Family Residence, and the Fanny Barns Family Shelter so they could have their own giveaways.

Led by their energetic staff advisors Correction Officer Aponte and Recreation Program Leader 2 Mahoney, the inmates organizing the special project this year were Larry Johnson, Kevin Williams, Ramel Williams, Anthony Artis, Ivan Suphal, and Robert Rose. All the inmates that organized and participated are committed to giving back to the communities from which they came. The rewards are seeing the smiles on the faces of the children, and knowing that they have played a role in making a difference for families in need. The inmates feel an obligation to "give back" and to actively contribute to the healing process between the prison community and the communities where their crimes were committed. These giveaways are one contribution to that process.