

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE



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### **Idaho State University Occupational Therapy Association, Holy Spirit Catholic School and Cre-Act Elementary School join to lighten up the burden of school backpacks**

Pocatello, Idaho – The Student occupational Therapy Association announced that it is partnering with the American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA) to conduct a backpack awareness day on September 21<sup>st</sup> to educate children, parents, school administrators, teachers and communities about the serious health effects on children from backpacks that are too heavy or worn improperly. This local event is part of National School Backpack Awareness Day, being held in schools and community centers across the country.

WHAT: A Backpack Awareness Day “WEIGH-IN” of grades K-6 students and their backpacks, identified the amount of weight that school children are carrying on their backs to and from school each day. A licensed occupational therapist and master level occupational therapy students’ educated students and teachers regarding the role of occupational therapy in schools. In addition education and demonstration was given on safe weight and packing tips for students who wear backpacks. At the ISU quad education and back pack weigh in also occurred as a service for those interested.

WHERE: Cre-Act Elementary & Holy Spirit Catholic School; ISU QUAD

WHEN: September 20-21, 2007

WHY: More than 7,000 children end up in emergency rooms each year suffering injuries from backpacks and book bags. The return to school is a reminder that more than 40 million American school children will once again be carrying heavy loads back and forth to school each day. Experts estimate that about half of these children will carry way too much weight. Research indicates that children carrying overloaded backpacks and improperly worn packs are likely to experience neck, shoulder, and back pain; adverse effects on posture and the developing spine; and compromised breathing and fatigue.

AOTA recommends that school backpacks weigh no more than 15% of a child’s weight. The growing awareness of potential long-term problems to children has resulted in increased medical research, and more coverage of the issue in mainstream publications as well as medical journals. There is proposed legislation in California and New Jersey to address the issue of backpack weight and student health.