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TLC – THE TREATMENT AND LEARNING CENTERS HELP CHILDREN AND PARENTS EASE THE SCHOOL BACKPACK BURDEN

Rockville, Md. – The Treatment and Learning Centers, a local, private non-profit providing educational, vocational, and therapeutic services to children and adults with disabilities and typically developing children, announced today that it is joining forces with the American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA) to host a Backpack Awareness Day on September 21st to educate children and parents about the serious health problems children may have from backpacks that are too heavy or worn improperly. This effort is part of National School Backpack Awareness Day, being held in schools and agencies across the country. Occupational therapists advise a backpack strategy of Pack it Light, Wear it Right with a recommended weight of no more than 15% of a child's weight.

“I can't emphasize the importance of children wearing their backpacks correctly enough, “ says Dr. Mary Way, Director of Occupational Therapy at TLC – The Treatment and Learning Centers. “We have seen an increase in the amount of weight children are carrying in their backpacks or book bags, coupled with wearing or carrying them improperly.” “TLC is committed to raising awareness around this public health issue and saving children from a lifetime of problems.”

The U.S. Consumer Product and Safety Commission estimates that more than 7,000 emergency room visits in 2001 resulted from injuries related to backpacks and book bags – half of those occurred among children between the ages of 5 and 14. The return to school is a reminder that more than 40 million children in the United States will be carrying heavy loads back and forth to school every day. Experts estimate that about half of these children will be carrying too much weight. Children carrying overloaded backpacks and improperly worn packs, according to the U.S. and international studies, are likely to experience neck, shoulder, and back pain; adverse effects on posture and the developing spine; and compromised breathing and fatigue. The growing awareness of potential long-term problems to children has resulted in increased medical research and proposed legislation in at least two states to address the issue of backpack weight in relation to student health.

TLC's occupational therapists, experts in helping school-aged children with a broad range of issues and disorders in addition to ergonomics, such as good handwriting skills and developmental problems, will be on hand to illustrate the appropriate amount of weight that school children should be carrying on their backs to and from school each day, and provide helpful strategies for loading and wearing backpacks and solutions for staying healthy and succeeding in school for both parents and educators. For more information call (301) 424-5200 or visit <http://www.ttlc.org>.

About TLC

TLC – The Treatment and Learning Centers, located in Rockville, Md., enables children and adults to develop their full potential, communicate effectively with others, and achieve educational and vocational success. TLC provides services that strengthen their abilities and respond to their changing needs. With more than 54 years

of service to the community, TLC is committed to integrity and excellence in our care and will strive to assist all, regardless of their ability to pay.

For more information on National Backpack Awareness Day, visit the American Occupational Therapy Association's website at <http://www.aota.org>.

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