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NATIONAL SCHOOL BACKPACK AWARENESS DAY EXPANDS TO INCLUDE “PACKS” THROUGHOUT THE LIFESPAN

September 16 to be Day of Awareness about Backpacks, Briefcases, Purses and Suitcases

Bethesda, MD — The American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA) is holding its 9th annual National School Backpack Awareness Day on September 16 this year. Across the country, occupational therapy practitioners will be holding backpack “weigh-ins” and other events. In an effort to reach a broader audience, AOTA has expanded its focus of Backpack Day to include “packs” throughout the lifespan—purses, briefcases and suitcases.

“I think it is a great idea that Backpack Day is now being expanded to include more information on products very similar in function to a backpack,” said Dr. Karen Jacobs, EdD, an occupational therapy practitioner, former AOTA president and a board certified professional ergonomist who has been with Backpack Day since its inception. “People of all ages can be smarter and safer about what they lift and carry.”

This year, AOTA with the help of Jacobs, has compiled purse, briefcase and suitcase tip sheets for consumers. Some examples include:

Purses:

- When buying a purse, it is important that it has straps that are wide and adjustable. Ensure that the pressure caused by the straps does not cause discomfort.
- One easy way to alleviate any unnecessary weight is to regularly empty your wallet of coins.

Briefcases:

- When choosing a briefcase, avoid selecting one made of heavy material such as leather. This only adds extra weight! Instead, select a briefcase made of lighter materials such as microfiber and nylon.
- Make sure to always pack the heaviest items at the bottom of your bag and make use of built-in compartments to distribute the weight evenly.

Suitcases:

- It is important that people have different types of suitcases for different modes of travel. If traveling by air, select wheeled luggage. If traveling by car, select duffels or garment bags.
- Opt for carrying two light suitcases, one in each hand rather than carrying one heavy suitcase in one hand or your shoulder.

For more tips and information about backpacks, purses, briefcases and suitcases visit the Backpack Day Web site at www.aota.org/backpack.

Founded in 1917, the **American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA)** represents the professional interests and concerns of more than 140,000 occupational therapists, assistants and students nationwide. The Association educates the public and advances the profession of occupational therapy by providing resources, setting standards including accreditations and serving as an advocate to improve health care. Based in Bethesda, Md., AOTA's major programs and activities are directed toward promoting the professional development of its members and assuring consumer access to quality services so patients can maximize their individual potential. For more information, go to www.aota.org.