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Family-A-Fair
event connects
people with
social services
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Building community

Jonathan Herrera, Fernanda Herrera, Daniel Herrera and Eliza Barrera Garcia enjoy snow cones during the Family-A-Fair, a community health and back-to-school festival on Sunday, Sept. 15, 2019 at the Gargiulo Education Center. ANDREA STETSON/CORRESPONDENT



Teens and pre-teens enjoyed, popcorn, snow cones and lemonade at the Family-A-Fair, a community health and back-to-school festival on Sunday, Sept. 15 at the Gargiulo Education Center in Naples. PHOTOS BY ANDREA STETSON/CORRESPONDENT

Family-A-Fair event focuses on health, community in Southwest Florida

Andrea Stetson
Special to Naples Daily News
USA TODAY NETWORK – FLORIDA

Several hundred people learned about all the free services in the community during the first Family-A-Fair, a community health and back to school festival on Sunday at the Gargiulo Education Center in Naples.

Steven Kissinger, chief operating officer at Meals of Hope, said he hoped the event will let more people know about some of the area's poorest communities.

"This is a highly underserved community," Kissinger said. "There are communities in south Bonita (Springs) and North Naples that are underserved."

Kissinger said the idea of the festival was to bring together vendors from a variety of local services so that people could see what is available. The event also was designed to bring awareness to an underserved population that lives off Old US 41 Road in Bonita or off Railhead Boulevard in North Naples, according to event organizers.

"They have no idea without something like this," Kissinger said. "This is an inaugural event. We are hoping to get some exposure so it will build."

Mobile Job-Link helped people learn about employment opportunities. Bikes for Tykes raffled off two bicycles, The Diabetes Foundation offered free testing. The Bonita Springs Lions Club conducted free eye and hearing tests. The group also offered free assistance for eye care to people without insurance.

Dress for Success and Counseling Services of Southwest Florida were there. Catholic Charities handed out food and clothing. St. Vincent de Paul Society had everything from toiletries and books to school uniforms to give away.

Mary Asta, executive director of the Gargiulo Education Center, spearheaded the event.

"We thought, how are we going to let people know that this community exists?" Asta said. "Hopefully this will bring out enough people so they can see the assistance that people need. We are trying to let the entire community know we are here to support them."



People at the Family-A-Fair lined up to learn more about Meals of Hope.



Skip Riffle and Terry Lake, volunteers with Bikes for Tykes, fix a bicycle.



Eileen Cinque of St. Vincent de Paul Society and Mary Asta, executive director of the Gargiulo Education Center, set out baskets of free toiletries during the Family-A-Fair.



Right: The Job-Link truck came to Family-A-Fair.