

Head Start picnic celebrates another year

HILLSDALE
DAILY NEWS

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Hillsdale, Mich.

HILLSDALE — With sunshine and a Disney Theme, the annual Early Childhood Community Picnic drew more than 200 visitors to the Hillsdale Community Action Agency Head Start Building Friday.

Organizer and education supervisor Carola Thomas said the event is a fun day that area Head Start students and their families look forward to.

“With the Disney theme, we have Cinderella, Belle, Tigger and Eeyore here with us today,” Thomas said.

The last few years, the event was opened up to the community since there are many volunteers and community supporters, she said. She recorded around 30 community volunteers with nearly all 95 CAA employees manning stations.

To help with parking were volunteers from the Hillsdale County Amateur Radio Club. Organizer Don Gambill said the club likes to help out with community events.

A variety of activities from games to pony rides entertained young children with prizes and ribbons handed out to participants.

Wearing a Kentucky Derby hat she made, Head Start teacher Sue Walberg passed out ribbons to children who rode stick horses on a short circular track. She said her niece in Illinois shows horses regularly and donated the ribbons so children could take home an official prize.

Head Start sub teachers Terry Farwell and Pamela Dobson also sported wide-brimmed hats with tulle and flowers that Walberg created for the event.

Thomas said eight different Head Start sites from the county each had different games and activities following the Disney theme for children to do at the picnic. While Reading offered a can toss, Greenfield's game of choice was bowling and Pittsford had a bean bag toss. Other activities included a Winnie the Poo Corner, a cookie walk, a bubble castle and more.

Donning a swim hat, teacher Cody Blair said he was staying cool while manning the Pitch Burst game. He sometimes would let young students come up to press the lever, releasing a water balloon to fall on his head while sitting in a chair.

Families filled picnic tables under one tent with their lunches, while another tent housed various organizations pertaining to early childhood development. Secretaries Rhonda Peters and Tammy Cook found some shade to set up their washable tattoo booth near the tent that organizations occupied with more games and information. Among those included the Hillsdale Dental Clinic, Great Start, CAPA, the Health Department, Michigan State University and veterans.

Inside the cafeteria, where families were served hot dogs and other goodies, the Smiles on Wheels booth was available to give fluoride treatments to children.

Stadium Roller Rink owner Doug Ingles brought in a half dozen scooters for children to ride inside a classroom. He said once the kids get the hang of moving their arms to get the scooter going, they have a blast.

Page 2 of 2 - Other attractions, like Gramps Ice Cream Truck run by Gary Scoville, enticed youngsters with treats. Scoville said he is starting his 29th season and has appeared at this event for a number of years.

Also available were pony rides provided by Saddle Up Buckaroos out of Sherwood. Owner Katie Brodock said this is the fifth year for her ponies to be part of the event and she looks forward to seeing the kids' faces showing excitement at the thought of riding the ponies.

The Waldron FFA also brought in several animals, giving children opportunity to pet numerous varieties including a rabbit, goat, puppy, pony and cow. Juduah Honeywell, 8 months, giggled as a small goat ventured toward his stroller for a closer look. His caretaker, Tashia Myers, said she brings day care kids from Kids Kampus to the event each year.

"It's our annual thing," Myers said. "It's a wonderful way to welcome summer and end the school year."



Candace Gardiner of the MSU Extension Office entertains children at her booth during Friday's picnic. NANCY HASTINGS PHOTO



Head Start teacher Sue Walberg and her helpers celebrated the Kentucky Derby. NANCY HASTINGS PHOTO



Jenna Elli, 8, finds entertainment with bubbles at the Bubble

Castle. NANCY HASTINGS PHOTO



Kylie Conn, 5, gets up close to a chick at the FFA petting zoo.

NANCY HASTINGS PHOTO



As the balloon clown, Jody Schaedler passes out balloons to

children. NANCY HASTINGS PHOTO



Head Start teacher Sue Walberg points the way of a stick horse

race. NANCY HASTINGS PHOTO



As Belle, Elizabeth Turner passed out wands to little girls. NANCY

HASTINGS PHOTO



Waldron FFA members shared a petting zoo with children

attending Friday's picnic. NANCY HASTINGS PHOTO



Doug Ingles shows Oskar Hammond, 3, how to use a riding scooter.

NANCY HASTINGS PHOTO



Gary Scoville passed out ice cream treats. NANCY HASTINGS

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