Fair is all about putting family first

BY SUE ELLEN ROSS Post-Tribune correspondent May 2, 2014 5:56PM

GARY — The recent Eighth Annual Parenting Awareness Month Indiana Parenting Fair was billed as an event that resources and a fun time for parents.

But the dozens of children present in the gymnasium of the Baber Youth Center/First AME Church seemed to get information and have as much fun as the adults.

Sponsored by the Indiana Parenting Institute (IPI) and Community & Faith Outreach Initiative, the event included games, giveaways, face painting, a mime presentation, a balloon artist, food vendors, music and a demonstrative Department.

“PAMI is an IPI public awareness initiative and is a monthlong celebration of people raising children in community,” IPI marketing and community relations director Jena Bellezza said. “Throughout the month of April, attention is on effective and responsible parenting education that advances the well-being of children. ... via celebrations of parents on current parenting issues.”

Among the 21 vendors involved at the fair were family services providers who distributed information about access to services in the Calumet Region — utility assistance, rent assistance, food banks, transportation assistance, child care, health care/health insurance, financial literacy, housing, and legal assistance.

Manning the table for Habit for Humanity was Sonia Zuniga, assistant manager of the organization’s Re-Store in length with Gary resident Laconjala Clark about home ownership through the organization’s program.

The working mom of eight children did not know that the Habitat for Humanity program, which people own home equity procedure, existed until she saw Zuniga at the parenting fair.

“I’m so excited about this,” Clark said after getting the particulars and finding that she meets the criteria, as she added, “The first thing I am going to do when I get home is fill out the application. This type of opportunity is a game-changer.”

Lew Wallace STEM Academy art teacher Kathryn Province and student Jabari Bell volunteered their creative services.
“This fair is a great thing for our parents and the many concerns they face,” Province said as she drew a red head girl. “It lets them know they are not alone.”

The fair is not just a growth opportunity for its attendees but also an opportunity to celebrate people raising children promote family togetherness, according to Bellezza.

“Families today do not spend much time together,” she said. “Due to fast-paced lives, hectic schedules, risks an challenged with today, many are experiencing gradual deteriorations in their family relationships. Yet family togetherness is crucial to our children’s futures. The Community & Faith Outreach Initiative, made up of representatives from various Northwest Indiana churches for grandparents and other relatives who are raising children when the children’s own parents are unable or un

The initiative provides programs, workshops and activities that offer support, uniting the family and drawing the attention and health care providers to one central location to provide information and assistance.

The Indiana Parenting Institute also provides various programs and workshops for families. For more information, visit www.indianaparentinginstitute.org.

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