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Solano Middle School Call to Action Family Day a hit



Solano County Supervisor Erin Hannigan, Jana Modena of Assemblyman Tim Grayson's Vallejo office, Hannigan aides Josette Lacey and Michael Wilson, and City Councilman Hakeem Brown, who were all instrumental in organizing the Call to Action Family Day (Rachel Raskin-Zrihen — Times-Herald)

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It started with a broken washing machine and culminated with an outpouring of community concern providing “wrap-around services” for an under-served Vallejo neighborhood.

Solano County Supervisor Erin Hannigan said she was given a tour of Solano Middle School in early May, and learned two things she hadn't known before — one was that the school had a washer and dryer for students who needed it, and the other, was that the washer was broken and had been for some time.

It was out of this that a Call to Action Family Day was conceived, planned in the space of two weeks, and held on Wednesday in the parking lot in front of the school. It is believed may be the first event of its kind in Vallejo, she said.

“We were here for a bike-to-school event, and went on a site tour with Principal Shayla Bowman, and she shared with us some of the needs of the students,”

Hannigan said. “The school had recently suffered the death of a student. It had been operating a free laundry, kept a few clothes for students (with clothing emergencies). The food bank came every other week, and I thought, wow, this is a school in need.”

The original idea was to replace the washing machine, and that was done, she said. She, Vallejo City Councilman Hakeem Brown and Assemblyman Tim Grayson pitched in for a brand-spankin’ new washer-dryer set and had it installed at the school to replace the old, broken equipment.

“We felt like we needed to do more,” Hannigan said. “The idea for a Call to Action Family Day came from our discussions.”

So, on Wednesday afternoon, Solano County Family Health Services, the Mobile Medical and Dental Clinics, set up at the school, to provide limited medical and dental care for free; and the Mobile Food Pharmacy, provided through a partnership with the Yoche Dehe Wintun Nation, Solano County and the Solano & Contra Costa Food Bank, handed out healthy items, though the booth with the free McDonald’s burgers and apple pies, donated by C.C. Yin McDonald’s and manned by members of the Rotary Club seemed to be a more popular table.



The Solano County Mobile Medical Clinic attracted a good number of students and parents, at Wednesday’s Call to Action event at Solano Middle School — possibly more for its roulette wheel than its medical services. (Rachel Raskin-Zrihen — Times-Herald)

Fighting Back Partnership, Safe Routes to School, Solano Pride, and the Vallejo Fire Department were there and the Solano Transportation Authority provided bike repair services and helmets.

“It’s an amazing event,” Bowman said. “The community came together and it’s an amazing opportunity.”

Mostly, Hannigan said, she wants the children “to feel they’re special — that we value and support them. I want the families to feel they matter, and that we care about them.”

The washer and dryer serves an even bigger purpose than just providing clean clothes to students who might otherwise not have them — they also provide a life skills lesson on how to operate a washer and dryer. That will come in handy for the rest of their lives, Bowman said.

A child whose circumstances leave him or her coming to school in dirty or old, shabby clothes, or in shoes with holes in them, can be emotionally devastating, especially in middle school, where students can be especially cruel to each other, event organizers said.

“Umbrellas are a big thing, or, maybe they’re sleeping in their car and need a good blanket,” Hannigan aide Josette Lacey said.

“Whatever we can do to support our kids is important,” Brown said. “The schools only have the children some seven hours a day; the rest of whatever they’re dealing with is coming from outside of school.”

Hannigan said an event similar to Wednesday’s Call to Action, is planned at the site in the fall, but with a more back-to-school theme. She’s working on a way to set up a free “clothes closet,” for students in need, as well.