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TROPICAL PARK

Disabled kids get book bags at Tropical Park

CHILDREN AFFECTED BY DISABILITIES AND THEIR FAMILIES RECEIVED FREE SCHOOL SUPPLIES AND ENJOYED A DAY FULL OF FUN AT TROPICAL PARK

Posted on Thu, Aug. 21, 2008

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Milagros Maita has a son diagnosed with autism. Sometimes she has trouble paying bills and caring for his special needs at the same time. But thanks to a little help from the Community Committee for Developmental Handicaps this year, her son Kevin will have a new backpack to show off at school.

At Saturday's CCDH Back to School Picnic at Tropical Park, almost 100 children affected by disabilities received free school supplies and enjoyed a variety of other activities.

"These families are needy, in terms of being economically disadvantaged, in addition to having a child with some form of a disability," said Helene Good, president and CEO of the CCDH. "This is our way of trying to get kids all the things they need to start a successful school year."

Office Depot donated the book bags, which were filled with school supplies like notebooks, pencils, folders, crayons, markers and more.

Best Buy volunteered its time by offering several big-screen televisions, which children used to play Xbox games such as Guitar Hero and Dragon Ball Z.

"Today, we live in a society that is all about the money so for Office Depot to donate backpacks with no selfishness is incredible," said Joshua Granick, who suffers from the developmental birth defect Spina Bifida.

Other sponsors of the event included Euromed Inc., which provided hot dogs.

Miami-Dade Parks and Recreation brought a set of adaptive wheelchair accessories that kids used to blow bubbles and draw on the floor.

"Events like these motivate and support our kids," Maita said. "It shows them they are not being thrown to the side. With the way things are going, a lot of families need help right now. And the CCDH has helped mine on multiple occasions."

The Spina Bifida Association of Southeast Florida co-hosted the event with the CCDH and ran a set of wheelchair basketball games.

According to Good, both organizations help families affected by disabilities find and get what they need to lead an average lifestyle.

"We can do anything from finding a recreational program for a disabled child to providing emergency financial assistance that can save a family from being evicted from their home," Good added.

The event's main purpose was improving inclusion and understanding between the disabled and nondisabled community. Throughout the day, children in wheelchairs played side-by-side with those using their legs.

"When people look around the park today, they will understand we are a real community that is not stuck sedentary at home," said Herman Sanchez, 17, while holding a basketball on his lap.

"It will help them understand how active we really are."

Sanchez was also born with Spina Bifida.

"If we can say I am like you and you are like me, then we can improve our communication. We are all in this world together and people need to understand that," Granick said.

The CCDH's next event will be the Breakfast for Champions on Oct. 21. There, the organization will recognize adults with disabilities who hold regular lives on their own.

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