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Bash provides free backpacks



This view is from the Boy Scout Troop 514's Signal Tower. In the foreground is the prayer tent. The large pole structure in the background is a pavilion named in honor of C. Doyle McCall. There were hundreds of visitors again this year at the Sixth Annual Epic End of Summer Bash held on the grounds of First United Methodist Church of Chiefland.

Story, Photos and Video By Jeff M. Hardison © July 30, 2016

CHIEFLAND – Hundreds of children went home with free backpacks after they participated in the fun at the Sixth Annual Epic End of Summer Bash, which was scheduled to be from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. on Saturday (July 30).



Chiefland Firefighter Chris Anderson (left) and Capt. Cal Morgan of Chiefland Fire Rescue stand near a display. These two gentlemen were ready to jump into a fire truck and leave the Epic End of Summer Bash if a call was made for help. In the meantime, they were there to help show the public that CFR needs more volunteer firefighters, EMTs and paramedics.

Sponsored by the First United Methodist Church of Chiefland, this year's bash once again included lots of school supplies and more.

There was free food at the site as well.

Diana Child, administrative assistant to Pastor Anthony "Tony" Rennett, was a key organizer. Child has served thusly since Pastor Terry Wines initiated the free event five summers ago. Back then, the bash was first considered as a replacement for Vacation Bible School.

There was a youth summer camp at the First UMC of Chiefland, again this year, though, in addition to this big bash.

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Pastor Rennett and his wife Tina Rennett relocated to Chiefland from Canada, and they are in their second year of service in this metropolitan area of Levy County. Last year's bash happened a bit before they had moved.

Among the many public agencies making a strong showing at the event this year were the Levy County Sheriff's Office and the Chiefland Fire Rescue Department.

Volunteers from the LCSO's Citizens On Patrol group helped with traffic control in the area where the Chiefland City Commission had agreed to the church's annual request to close a bit of that neighborhood to through traffic for those hours on that day.



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Katie Trimm (left) and Cassidy Brock of the Dixie-Levy-Gilchrist branch of the UF/IFAS Extension Family Nutrition Program man a table on one of the corners of the set of tables at the vendor area.



Dee Dee Smith of the Dixie-Levy-Gilchrist branch of the UF/IFAS Extension Family Nutrition Program looks around the back of the model cow as one child pets the cow's head and another child milks the cow.

Among the many, many public and private interests and enterprises also at the event were Palms Medical Group, the Levy County Prevention Coalition, Quit Doc, the Levy County Health Department, Clyatt House Learning Center and the UF/IFAS Extension Family Nutrition Program.

Children had plenty of opportunities to have fun as they played with some inflatable slides. They also milked a fake cow as a hands-on learning experience provided by the University of Florida's Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences Extension Family Nutrition Program.

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Logan Acevedo awaits a child to retrieve the softball used to be pitched at a target for the dunking booth. Acevedo was among the many, many volunteers helping this year's bash succeed.

Another entertaining activity for children and adults was the dunking booth. Among the volunteers to serve as the person being dunked was Logan Acevedo. This young man made sure that every child throwing at the target found success in dunking him.

There were plenty of free hotdogs. There was free water too. The whole event was free. There was no soliciting for political or business purposes allowed on the property during the event. This year was the culmination of the five previous years' of experiences to improve the event to make it even better.

The sights, sounds, smells, flavors, feelings and the whole spirit of giving unconditional love made the entire festival environment part of an extremely happiness-oriented event. Certainly there were some haters and naysayers at points in the crowd, but overall a good time was had by all.

The layout of the grounds was different this year than in years gone by.

The giant pole structure that is known as a pavilion and is named in honor of C. Doyle McCall provided shade. With almost every vendor placed there, that created a jam-packed area of people, where it was a bit more difficult to communicate with each other than when product and service providers were spread across the large open field area behind First United Methodist Church of Chiefland.

The church again offered a prayer tent. And this area was clear from the packed pavilion. Tina Rennett was among the prayer warriors there.

This was the first Epic End of Summer Bash for the pastoral couple of Tony and Tina Rennett. Tina Rennett said that she and her husband became energized by what they saw at the bash.

First United Methodist Church of Chiefland continues its reputation for the church where "Open hearts. Open minds. Open doors." Is not only a slogan, but is a practice.

"This is an example of the church coming together to make things happen for everybody," she said. "Here we are extending a helping hand."

This event is one of the methods for this United Methodist Church to practice one of its missions of community outreach. Serving as a location for Boy Scouts to meet, and as a location for Alcoholics Anonymous participants to meet and for other civic functions are other community outreach programs at this church.

The first 500 or so children who entered the fun area in Saturday found colorful backpacks that were given to them for free. As they went to the many various tables, they also discovered free spiral notebooks, pens, pencils, erasers, rulers, Crayons and more.

Just as in years past, there were clothes for free that were given to families too.

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Jaime Hinote, an outreach specialist of Palms Medical Group, mans the table for this community healthcare provider.



Jonathan Lewis, chief operating officer of the Levy County Prevention Coalition is among the members of that group who were at the event and helping the public learn about this organization's efforts to help residents and visitors to enjoy a healthy lifestyle.

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The Clyatt House Learning Center is among the vendors that provided information and school supplies to passersby.