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Resource fair shows community what's out there to help

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Ten-year-old Rosalie Quezada wore a shiny, new black bicycle helmet like it was a crown.

But this crown will provide the west Modesto girl's head with a layer of protection when she rides her bike around her neighborhood.

Although she already owned a helmet, it was old, cracked and worn, she said. And Rosalie didn't have to pay a penny for her new piece of safety equipment.

Quezada was one of as many as 200 children who got free bicycle helmets Saturday at the Community Resource Faire at César Chávez Park on Sierra Drive in west Modesto.

The event, hosted by the Paradise South Weed and Seed program, was part celebration, part picnic and part information session.

The informational part was a resources fair that brought together more than a dozen private and public agencies, which distributed handouts, pamphlets, coloring books, pencils, Frisbees and other items to people so they could learn about the services they offer. Agency workers also were available to answer questions.

The point of the event, Weed and Seed program coordinator Cindy Rhea said, was "to get information to residents and connect them with resources they can use."

Sam Lujan, 52, who has lived in west Modesto for nearly 40 years, was passing by when he saw the booths and people and decided to check it out. He stopped at booths, picking up information to take home, including a Drug Abuse Resistance Education coloring book for his nephew.

While her daughter, Rosalie, got a bike helmet, 44-year-old Violeta Quezada collected information from Stanislaus County's environmental resources department on how to prevent, and report, blight in her neighborhood.

Quezada, who moved to west Modesto from South San Francisco seven years ago, said she's seen how the Weed and Seed program's efforts have made a positive impact in the neighborhood.

Nelda Parman agreed.

Parman has worked at Sierra Vista Child and Family Services as a parent mentor for more than five years and has lived in the community 15 years. She's also a member of the Weed and Seed steering committee.

She called the program's efforts to help beautify neighborhoods on the west side of town "incredible."

"We want people to know there are good things going on here," Parman said.

The event also included a Celebration of Dads ceremony, in which essays children wrote about their fathers were read.

Jose Carlos and Sara Garcia came to hear their 11-year-old daughter Angelica's essay about her dad, in which she wrote that she loved her father "more than life itself."

For more information about the Weed and Seed program, call 342-6105. Bee staff writer Donna Birch can be reached at dbirch@modbee.com or 578-2309.

Posted on 06/24/07 00:00:00

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