

September 16, 2008

Step Up for Kids Day

America stepped up for kids on Tuesday, September 16, 2008. Social workers, child advocates, politicians, and kids joined together across the country to rally for children's issues including health care, poverty, early childhood education, and after-school programs. The Every Child Matters DC staff kicked off the event with Dr. T. Berry Brazelton at an evening reception the night before on Capitol Hill in Washington D.C. National cosponsors, staff, and friends turned out to celebrate the beginning of what will become an annual event. Brazelton smiled for photos with his fans, while guests sipped on cocktails and munched on their favorite childhood snacks including grilled cheeses and pigs in a blanket.

Kicking off the main event's national extravaganza Tuesday morning, ECM President, Michael Petit spoke to members of the press and fellow child-advocate representatives at the National Press Club in D.C. The audience not only filled the room but spilled out into the hall, as well, with folks hoping to hear what Petit and the other speakers had to say. Dr. Brazelton, Renee

Jenkins of the American Academy of Pediatrics, Elizabeth Clark of the National Association of Social Workers, and Jim Hmurovich, president & CEO of Prevent Child Abuse America, all spoke passionately about their experience in the field and the dire need for investing in programs that will benefit American children.

Following the press conference, a group of DC youth led members of the audience over to City Hall where they joined fellow classmates and Fox News reporter Claudia Coffey for a Q&A with three young students about what it's like growing up in the nation's capitol. The male speakers blew everyone away with their advanced speaking skills and emotional personal stories that they shared. One spoke of learning to read despite having dyslexia and while another spoke of the triumph of planning for college despite having grown up homeless. To see video footage from the local DC event, [click here](#).

Similar events were held around the country that day...

Step Up for Kids in D.C. Photos

Below left: Dr. T. Barry Brazelton spoke about the importance of investing in kids at the National Step Up for Kids press conference in Washington, D.C. **Below center:** Local D.C. children paraded from the national press event to the local D.C. event held at City Hall. **Below right:** Three speakers at the local D.C. event discussed personal stories of schooling and growing up in the nation's capital.



In **SOUTH DAKOTA**

Joined by 23 co-sponsors, the South Dakota Voices for Children group led the state's two events on Step Up for Kids Day, one in Rapid City and the other in Sioux Falls. The Rapid City group hosted a candidate forum which 20 of the 25 state legislative candidates came to speak at. With approximately 80 adults and several children in attendance, the candidates addressed solely kids' issues by answering questions from moderators and the audience.

The Sioux Falls group hosted Dr. Jerry Blake, an assistant professor of pediatrics at the University of South Dakota's Sanford School of Medicine, who spoke to adult audience members about how South Dakota fared when compared to surrounding states in various areas of children's health. Greg Boris, from the SD Network of Every Child Matters, then spoke about the child-focused effort taking place across the country and the need to get candidates to address children's issues.

In **UTAH**

Utah's event was held at Fairmont Park in Salt Lake City. With approximately 175 participants in attendance, everyone received a free tee shirt and enjoyed a free continental breakfast made possible by generous contributions.

Children enjoyed 16 free activities while candidates, media representatives, and attendees learned more about why we need to make children's issues a national priority in the upcoming elections. Chris Bray, executive director of Children's Service Society of Utah spoke to attendees and wanted them to come away from the event with three things:

- To understand why children's issues are critical
- To know what resources are available
- To know how you can do to make a difference for the children in Utah

Packets were given to each adult attendee that included the following:

- "Ask the Candidate" card that has 6 questions we would like to adults and media to ask their political candidates.
- "I'm voting for Kids" bumper sticker and fan
- Homeland Insecurity booklet that describes why children must be a priority in the 2008 presidential campaign

Television stations KUTV, KSL, and Fox covered the event. Uah Pulse and Radio KCPW also did interviews. The event also had 10 political candidates attend!

Step Up for Kids in Utah Photos

Below left: Children and families attend the Step Up for Kids event in Salt Lake City, Utah. **Below center:** Chris Bray, executive director of Children's Service Society of Utah, led the state event. **Below right:** Those in attendance played games, made crafts, and listened to music, all in celebration of America's kids!



In **TENNESSEE**

Tennessee held nine regional events on September 16 in celebration of Step Up for Kids Day. The NW Tennessee Regional event held on the Martin Campus of the University of Tennessee was one of the nine, and it was held after work hours, from 5:30pm to 8:30pm in order to garner more participants.

Approximately 40 vendors provided games, educational opportunities & prizes to those in attendance, including a fire simulator courtesy of the local fire department and a drunk driving simulator courtesy of the police department. In addition, the Tennessee Wildlife Association had a Birds of Prey Exhibit – illustrating regional rescued birds and the Martin Housing Authority sold food to raise money for their Afterschool Program. Entertainment included music by a local DJ and youth group performances performed every 15 minutes – they sang, danced, acted and even impersonated Elvis!

NW Regional Wal-Marts pooled their money and donated a computer and Martin Authority donated a printer – both of which were given away as prizes. Event leaders also received monetary donations which were

used to purchase 15 Wal-Mart gift card prizes, ranging from \$20 to \$50. Along with the music and festivities, speakers addressed the crowd about the importance of raising children's issues among family and friends who are planning on voting in this year's election. And the voter registration booth successfully registered 25 new voters!



Above: The Birds of Prey Exhibit at the NW Tennessee Step Up event attracted a large audience. Paris Landing State Park ranger Tammy South shows off one type of the park's many bird species.

More Photos



Left top: Attendees in Long Island, New York stand with county legislator declaring September 16, 2008 as Step Up for Kids Day.



Left bottom: Participants in Juneau, Alaska stood together for 10 minutes in silence to symbolize how children do not have a voice in the political world but are still greatly affected by its policy.

Right: One young audience member was captivated by what local school member, Cortez Quinn, had to say about the importance of early education.

