

Some serious fun for the kids, free of drugs and crime

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While her daughter Cherish sat patiently as her face was transformed into a white rabbit's, Vivian Isaac took advantage of the wealth of information available Saturday in Reading's Baer Park.

After visiting the various tables set up during the 15th annual Community Day Anti-Drug and Crime rally, Isaac said she discovered a potential job opportunity, tutoring services to help her get her master's degree and information about how to get fire alarms in her home.

Meanwhile, Cherish got to play with friends in an inflatable bounce house and enjoy a free lunch of hamburgers and hot dogs.

"I accomplished a lot here in one sitting and now I have some homework to do," Isaac said with a laugh. "This is such a positive thing. Bringing this stuff here makes it positive, and if they keep doing stuff like this, there will be more positive people in our community."

The rally was presented by Berks Community Action Program and the Reading Branch of the NAACP. The event also included live music, service awards and recognition, vendors and plenty of children's activities.

BCAP Executive Director Lawrence A. Berringer said the event is designed to bring the community together for a safe and fun day out. He said communities across the country are eroding as crime, drugs and violence become more prevalent.

"The way to combat that is to start with the young kids, the younger the better," Berringer said. "We want to spread the word that it takes more than a parent, but like the old saying, it takes a village.

"We may not be able to save every one, but each one or two we do is a victory."

Sonia Morales, 8, and Leea Jimenez, 9, sat poring over a large chessboard at a table sponsored by the Council on Chemical Abuse.

The girls said they've been learning how to play the strategic game at the Olivet Boys and Girls Club and had their eyes on a small trophy in the middle of the table.

Mike Reese, a contractor with COCA, said chess helps kids learn the importance of thinking before making a decision.

"You can't take back your move in chess, just like you can't take back your choices in life," he said.

David and Deania Rauch and their son Davin, 11, met up with some family and friends at the rally.

David, who works with BCAP, said they try to make it to the event every year.

"We've had a really good day here," he said as he looked across the crowd in the park. "It's great seeing a lot of people and seeing good, positive things in the community. It's important to me to come out and support that."

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