



3 on 3 Basketball Tournament

August 8, 2007

Thanks to so many of you who attended the second annual *Jeff Smith 3-on-3 Basketball Tournament* recently. For those who couldn't attend I wanted to let you know that the event was a huge success, and we've already started planning for next year. We added several new components this year: a community service fair, a variety of health screenings, and the distribution of hundreds of books and bags of school supplies to kids in attendance.

Twenty volunteers helped promote and execute the event. Elected officials joined in on the fun as referees and perused the service tents while a DJ spun music. A group brought their huge grill and, along with other local unions, cooked and served burgers and hot dogs, wings, ice cream, and drinks all afternoon.

Every player received a T-shirt; and there were enough school supplies to go around even for kids not registered to play basketball. In addition to trophies, first place winners in each one of four age groups received brand new bicycles, second place finishers received theme park passes, and third place winners received gift certificates to local businesses.

We also offered a variety of health services and information free of charge, including posture and blood pressure and vision screenings. (One optometrist told me it was the busiest they had been at any fair — they were still screening people after we cleaned up the park late that afternoon!) Blood drive donors earned Cardinals t-shirts. And organizations distributed information about how to protect against sexually transmitted diseases and passed out prophylactics. (So there is a way to disseminate research-based, scientifically accurate information in spite of the recent passage of [House Bill 1055](#), which promotes abstinence-only education that has been proven ineffective, even as the number of unintended pregnancies and STDs remains stubbornly high.)

Fittingly, there was a petition circulated to reinstate the 2005 Medicaid cuts that many people happily signed.

We gave out over 400 brand new books, many of them picture books. Several literacy organizations participated, including Literacy Investment for Tomorrow, the Literacy Round Table, the Literacy Council, First Book-St. Louis, Ready Readers and the [St. Louis Public Library](#) who took library card applications. The Missouri Humanities Council had

children reading on blankets and decorating masks from by Maurice Sendak's classic, Where the Wild Things Are.

The St. Louis Agency on Training and Employment (SLATE) was on hand with job training info; Operation Brightside distributed litter bags and helped keep our park clean during the tournament; Beyond Housing provided information about buying homes and preventing foreclosures. Other services for families included: Head Start, Parent Link, Child Care Resource and Referral, and Better Family Life, Parents as Teachers, and the University of Missouri which provided information on proper nutrition.

Poison Control handed out [Mr. Yuck](#) stickers and lead poison precautions. We embraced diversity with La Crèche, a French immersion program available in the city in spite of [HJR7](#), the recent bill which attempts to ban languages other than English from Missouri's civic discourse. Big Brothers/Big Sisters and Latchkey/YWCA were taking names for volunteers and for children to register. And speaking of volunteers..

If you were not able to be part of the fair, there is still a way that you can help. There is a dire need for volunteer mentors for Urban Future, which partners with families, schools and the community, to promote the success of urban youth through character growth, academic achievement, and career preparation. Urban Future is one of the most successful local school-based programs of the last decade in St. Louis. Please see the link below for more information. Volunteers are required to do the following:

75 minutes each week at the school (includes one hour mentoring session and debrief).

A weekly conversation with your student's parent(s).

A mid-week phone discussion with your student.

We're all wringing our hands over the recent turmoil in the St. Louis City schools. But this is a way to roll up your sleeves and really make a difference in a child's life. Please help. If you can join me in supporting [Urban Future](#), just let me know.

Thanks as always,

Jeff

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