



Sampson, 16, stands still while karate instructor John G. Daniel, president of the Unity Day Youth & Family Zone, delivers a kick measured to fall just short of Sampson. The demonstration was part of the activities Saturday during the District 6 Back to School Extravaganza. [



Regina Mullen and two of her children sat patiently among several hundred people Saturday at the Milton J. Womack Park on Saturday while attending the “Back to School Extravaganza.”

Mullen, 43, had worked her night shift at her full-time job and then made the trip to the event looking for school information and to pick up the free supplies being offered.

The last eight months haven’t been easy for the family, she explained.

Her husband lost his job and hasn’t been able to find a new one, she said. As a result, they had to move to a smaller home across town and after paying bills, sometimes it’s impossible to make ends meet.

“In the last year, it’s just been so hard,” she said. “The biggest thing for me right now is to get my kids into a safe school.”

She said, however, she knows things will get better and the tough times will go away, but for now, the help to make sure her children can start school with the supplies they need is welcome. Public schools begin classes Aug. 11.

“It makes a big difference,” she said. “There’s a lot of people here who really, really need help.”

The event was organized by Councilwoman Donna Collins-Lewis with support from Rep. Michael Jackson, BREC, Star Hill Church and numerous donors and volunteers, Collins-Lewis said.

“We had quite a few generous sponsors,” she said. “People see the need and they were very generous.”

In all, there was about \$3,500 in money and supply donations for the event which helped fill about 130 backpacks for elementary school students and about another 150 plastic bags with supplies for middle school-aged students, she said.

“Hopefully, we’ll be able to help 300 kids,” she said.

On the other side of the room Lucy Martin, 27, said a neighbor had told her about the event and so she brought her three children — ages 3, 4 and 8 to check it out.

“I didn’t think there would be this much for them to do,” Martin said. “They had a lot of fun.”

BREC had opened up a play room that included areas to play basketball, video games and more for the kids.

In another area, the Clerk of Court’s Office set up a booth to create identification cards for the children including a photograph and fingerprints.

“I like this,” she said looking at the identification cards her children handed her.

Standing outside the main hall, Danielle Craig, 24, said she expected it to be this crowded since the economy means more people are struggling right now.

Two of her children carried their new backpacks that were full of what they would need when school starts soon. Inside there were paper towels, crayons, rulers, paper, glue, folders and even toothpaste.

“Do we get to keep it?” asked Javonta Craig, 6. When told yes, both he and his sister Jasmine Craig gave a cheer.