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POCI gears up for back to school fair

MIAMI – A group of school based social workers – the Partnership of Ottawa County – have been busy organizing their 10th annual Back to School Fair for Aug. 5 at the First Christian Church in Miami.

Doors will be open from 9 a.m. to noon where preschool children to senior high students who qualify for free or reduced-price lunches will receive free school supplies and dental, hearing and vision exams.

School-based Social Worker Janet Atwell said students will receive supplies from the school list for their grade and children may only receive supplies from one program. Atwell also said donations have come in from many community businesses and organizations.

Each student will also receive two boxes of Kleenex tissue donated by Integris Baptist Regional Health Center. Northeastern Oklahoma A&M College donated pens, pencils and bags. Area banks have also donated rulers, pens and pencils as well.

Main Attraction Beauty Academy will be giving free haircuts again this year. Co-Owner Amy Haile said the academy students will do basic cuts for the boys and girls.

“We were asked to participate four years ago,” Haile said. “And we got pleasure from helping the kids who need it, so we kept it up. We can’t wait to get started this year.”

Haile said her students also benefit from the experience—learning how to do haircuts in a fast-paced environment. Last year about 60 children received free haircuts.

All incoming seventh grade students are required to have one dose of the tetanus-diphtheria-pertussis vaccine. The Ottawa County Health Department will be available at the fair as a resource for parents who want to know if their child is current on their immunizations.

School-based Social Worker Tiffany Rowe said she has three children and she has already spent \$60 on school supplies.

“We see families who sometimes have five children and that really adds up and even the basic things add up to a lot of money,” Rowe said. “And when you don’t have \$60 to spend on just the basics, it’s a lot of money.”

Resource booths, from agencies like Girls Scouts, Boys and Girls Club, Ottawa County 4-H/OSU Extension and the Miami Public Library, will be available for families to visit while making their way to the free school supplies.

If anyone would like to set up a resource booth contact Kathy Enyart at 918-542-1688.

Donations can be dropped off, up to the day before the fair, at the Oklahoma Department of Human Services.

Donations of pencils, blue/black/red pens, colored pencils, highlighters, expo markers, sharpies, markers, crayons, school boxes, pencils boxes, watercolors, glue sticks, glue bottles, scissors, erasers, rulers, spiral notebooks, loose leaf paper, folders, binders and index cards are needed.

For more information, contact Dana Giles at 918-919-9210 or Janet Atwell at 918-919-9109.