

EDUCATION EVENTS: READING IN THE PARK, TRICK OR TREATING BEFORE THE GAME



Above: Crockett County's Save the Children Reading Ambassadors: Tammy Womack (Maury City), Cassie Pearson (Gadsden), and Ashlee Hall (Friendship). (Photo by Ron Barry)

By Ron Barry

The early part of the week was for reading. The late part of the week is for treating.

Tuesday afternoon at the Blue Cross Healthy Place Park, Crockett County's Save the Children reading ambassadors Ashlee Hall, Cassie Pearson, and Tammy Womack – with their Lead Associate Sandy Arnold – hosted Fall Family READ in the Park, an event highlighting the promotion of the love of reading among elementary school families in the District. More on that in a few minutes.

Coming up Thursday afternoon – preceding the Crockett County vs. Fayette-Ware football game at Cavalier Stadium Halloween night – more than 20 CCHS sport teams, clubs, and organizations will host a Trick or Treat event on the campus from 4:30-6:30, either between the tennis courts and the baseball and softball fields or in the auxiliary gymnasium, depending on the weather. Free candy will be available, along with games and princess photos. The Art Club will even have a special Tim Burton-themed game area, and the cheerleaders will be selling loaded fries and cotton candy.

Sarah Kennedy, the faculty coordinator for the Halloween event, said it will be a unique opportunity for children to gather in a safe, singular location and be able to collect all the candy they can handle, along with having the chance to play interesting games and seeing the creativity the different teams and clubs produce.

All kids who attend in costume will also be admitted to the football game that night free of charge. Any parent accompanying a costumed child will be admitted at the discounted rate of \$5. The event is currently planned to be outside, but rain is forecast for Thursday and may force the event inside to the auxiliary gymnasium. Even if forced inside, the event will still feature everything that would have been held outside.

The reading celebration held Tuesday was designed to give families the chance to come to the Healthy Place Park, spread a blanket on the ground, and spend some time reading together to spotlight the immense gains made at all three Crockett County School District elementary facilities since the Save the Children reading emphasis began.

Tuesday's READ event featured new books, snacks, scarecrow art and fall bookmarks, a photo booth for families, and several literacy games to encourage young readers to continue their love for books.

Each of the Crockett elementary schools has a specific ambassador – funded primarily by Save the Children – and all three report amazing success at their respective locations.

"This program has been a tremendous success," said Hall, who heads up the program at Friendship Elementary. "We see kids excited about reading now that didn't really show that much interest before. We have a lot of kids reading chapter books now that never would even touch them before. Now they're flying through them."

Pearson, the ambassador for Gadsden Elementary, said the program is benefiting the local libraries as well because the children are looking for specific book series or just a variety, beside what they can get at school.

"We haven't forced this program on anyone," Pearson said, "because we want each student to read because it's fun for them, not because they're being told to do it. And the response has been great. Some other counties in Tennessee had this program and lost it because they didn't show much gain from it. But Crockett's program has been one of the most successful things ever done around here. I grew up here, so I know what a difference it's making."

Womack leads the program at Maury City Elementary and says one of her favorite things is being able to watch the kids making so much use of the school library and the free books provided by Save the Children.

"So many kids are getting involved because they have discovered that when it's presented as a fun thing to do, it becomes much more enjoyable," she said. "The free books have been a tremendous blessing. The three of us have worked well together to get the most out of the resources we've been given, and we want to continue to prove the program's worth to the state legislature."

Hall said some of the classroom teachers have told them that the kids are even hiding books in their laps when they're supposed to be focusing on another subject other than reading.

"That's just another way we know that these kids have bought into the message we're trying to send. Reading is fun. Reading is important as a lifelong activity. Becoming a good reader will make you better in all of your other studies. And all three schools are seeing the benefits."

Funding to continue the Save the Children READ program was late coming through as this school year began, but the ambassadors say the legislators should be hearing the next request in November this time around, which they hope will secure what is necessary in plenty of time to incorporate into the District budget for next year.

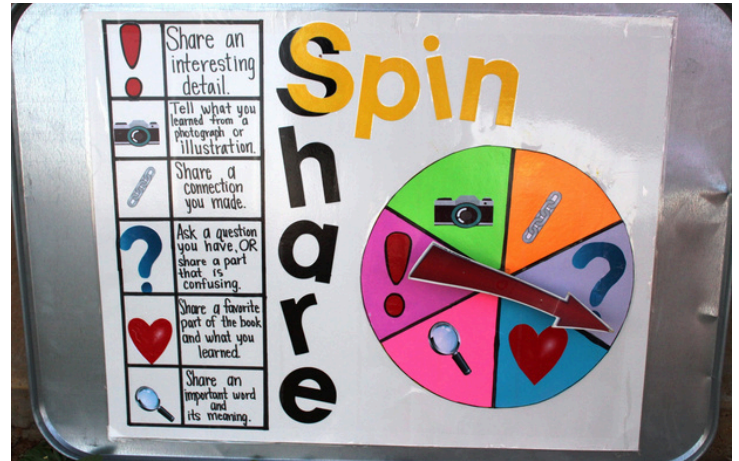


Above: Families were encouraged to bring a blanket to the Blue Cross Healthy Place Park, spread it out, and read a book together. (Photo courtesy of Ashlee Hall)

Below: The sign-in table was decorated in bright fall colors. (Photo courtesy of Ashlee Hall)



Below: Several reading games were available, such as this "Spin Share" board. (Photo by Ron Barry)



Above: This family shared a book in the warmth of the setting sun. (Photo courtesy of Ashlee Hall)



Above: : Another family chose to read a book on their blanket. (Photo courtesy of Ashlee Hall)



Above: : The ambassadors even brought extra blankets in case a family had not brought its own. (Photo courtesy of Ashlee Hall)



All clubs and teams will be set up with candy and treats.
 Elementary school aged kids and younger get in free to the football game, in costume. Accompanying parents get in for \$5.

Senior Night before the game;
 Football Game starts at 7:00 PM

Above: Here's the quick information poster regarding the Halloween Trick or Treating on the school grounds Thursday. (Design by Sarah Kennedy)

Below: Amarion Hobson, who scored two of Crockett's four touchdowns against Haywood last week, will be trying to scare the daylights out of Fayette-Ware on Halloween night as the Cavaliers conclude their regular season schedule. The Region 7-4A contest is also Crockett's Senior Night. (Photo by Ron Barry)

