

Contact: Hannah Greene
Office: 510-272-6768
Cell: 510-220-3866
Email:
hannah.greene@acgov.org

1221 Oak Street, Suite 536
Oakland, CA 94612
Phone: 510-272-6695
Fax: 510-271-5151

**Alameda County
Supervisor Keith Carson, Fifth District**

For Immediate Release

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Press Release

Learning Made Fun at the 5th Annual Ready to Learn Fun Fair

Berkeley, CA—Over 300 children, parents and family members packed the Rosa Parks Elementary School multi-purpose room on Saturday, November 6 for the 5th Annual Ready to Learn Fun Fair presented by Alameda County Supervisor Keith Carson.

Now in its fifth year, the free event was conceived as a way to make valuable resources available to as many people in the community as possible. “Preparing children to become socially, emotionally, and academically ready to learn is the gateway to success,” said Supervisor Carson. “Especially now with cuts to childcare funding and slashed school budgets, we need to make sure that our agencies and community based programs are reaching families in need.”

According to the 2000 Census, only 49.3% percent of all 3 and 4 year-olds are enrolled in early education and childcare programs. A report by the National Institute for Early Education Research showed that children in early education programs aligned with the educational goals of early elementary school are more likely to graduate from high school and become productive members of their communities. They are also less likely to have children during their teenage years or become involved in the criminal justice system.

After picking up a free book and dental kit, children and parents wove their way through resource tables filled with fun and engaging activities. Twenty-two organizations serving Alameda County families shared resources relating to education, family support, nutrition, recreation and art. Each organization offered a hands-on activity for children and helpful information for parents and caregivers.

Alan Bern of the Berkeley Public Library spoke with over 100 people at the event and was able to communicate to children that learning is fun through the activity of creating a personalized bookmark. “Early Literacy and Creating Young Readers’ is one of Berkeley Public Library’s primary strategic planning goals,” Bern explained. “Because children (and even their families) cannot always easily come to us, we have as a priority meeting them where they are so that they can learn about our services and programs.”

Clifford the Big Red Dog was a main attraction throughout the day as children posed to take pictures and play with the beloved character. He also assisted a pair of volunteers from the Screen Actors Guild Book PALS program who read interactive children’s stories. In the middle of the event, a crew from the Berkeley Fire Department arrived with a truck to perform a demonstration and discuss safety with the children.

Entertainment was provided by Buki the Clown and her assistant Mariposa, who painted faces and delighted children with a magic show. Children’s rock musician Stephanie Pepitone wowed the crowd with a set of energetic songs. Free raffles were held throughout the day with prizes including tickets to museums, clothing, gift certificates to local shops and free groceries.

The event was sponsored by Alameda County Supervisor Keith Carson, Alameda County First 5 Every Child Counts, The Socially Responsible Network, Alta Bates Summit Medical Center, Scholastic Books and MassMutual.

To view video of the Ready to Learn Fun Fair, please visit <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IOgHUjQLUdg>.

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