

## **Educating the parents**

*Springhill council provides community with tons of valuable information*

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Although the lousy weather kept many away, those who braved the hard rain on Saturday received tons of important school information - along with lunch and chances to win gift cards - at the Free Parent Conference.

The conference was sponsored by the Education Council at Springhill Baptist Church and held at the church.

Marjorie Thomas, co-chair of the church's educational council, lamented the inclement weather, but was pleased with the conference, which provided parents with information they can use to help their children succeed in school. Thomas said participants had an opportunity to network, get to know each and receive tickets for a chance to win \$50 gift cards, \$25 Walmart and Publix gift cards and door prizes.

"We're happy for those who are here," Thomas said. "The weather is God's business."

The Rev. Adrian Taylor, pastor of Springhill, said it's the community's responsibility to educate the children. "We all have a vested interest in education excellence," Taylor said.

Highlights of the conference were the 35- to 40-minute workshops led by educators and designed for parents to receive information to help them understand the grade-level transitioning process. Because of time constraints, it was necessary to combine the middle to high school and the high school to college workshops.

Diane Hill, director of the Voluntary Pre-Kindergarten program for Alachua County Public Schools, who discussed the transition from Head Start/VPK to kindergarten, told parents to make sure their children are kindergarten ready, prepared and respectful. She discussed material students are expected to learn in kindergarten and encouraged parents to work with their student.

“Make sure your child is respectful,” Hill said. “It’s important to establish a relationship with the teacher and to talk to other parents on a regular basis.”

Lawson Brown, vice principal of Fort Clarke Middle, who offered the invocation and also discussed the transition from elementary to middle school, told parents to use the Infinite Campus Portal to stay informed about their student’s assignments, grades, testing schedules, homework and other issues.

He said when parents talk to their child about school, the child understands that school is important.

“It sets the tone for expectations,” Brown said.

Kimberly Stanton was pleased with the conference. As a mother of a first-grade boy, Stanton said she makes sure to stay active in her son’s school. “I need to be involved and make sure education is a priority and to do anything we can to promote education,” Stanton said.

Valerie Herring said the information she received will help her to help her 17-year-old son, who will be a senior in the fall at Buchholz High School. Herring said she

visited all of the booths and received a lot of good information. “The vendors are all represented well,” Herring said. “I got information about the FAFSA (Free Application for Financial Student Aid) and scholarships available. I really appreciate all the information.”

The 19 vendors offering one-on-one information included the Alachua County Public Schools, Nu Eta Lambda chapter of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity Inc., the Alachua County Library District, Envision Alachua, Santa Fe College East Gainesville Instruction, city of Hawthorne Youth Training Program, Alachua County Supervisor of Elections, Mike Powell & Associates, the Gainesville alumni chapter of Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity Inc., the Ja’Niah Irving Youth Foundation, East Side Student Assistance Inc., MYcroSchool, SIATech School, National Achievers Society, PACE Center for Girls of Alachua County, the University of Florida Admissions Office, Head Start, Gainesville HIPPY, and the Gainesville Police Department.