



School year set to begin Monday for some students



Salvation Army volunteers Cassandra Bell, left, and Esqueeta Horrocks, right, pose with the Sanders-Wright family who were among the more than 200 children who received free backpacks filled with school supplies at The Salvation Army Back-to-School Health Fair and Gospel Concert on July 23 at Cooper Park in West Pullman. The children are, from left, Jermiya Bland, 4; Jermiya Wright, 8; Jaemone Wright, 7; Brianna Sanders, 12; Deon Sanders, 3; Daavna Sanders, 9; and Dequan Jackson, 13.

Defender Staff Report

Back-to-school lessons are cranking to get some Chicago Public Schools students.

As the school districts Track E year-round schools get set to start the new school year Monday, school

and city leaders, as well as community organizations, are wounding the hell, encouraging students to prepare to attend the first day and every day of school.

Meyer Rubin Emanuel and the public schools CEO Jean-Claude Boiral presided the previous

Tuesday in a door-to-door campaign to the Auburn-Gresham community where they reminded parents and subjects about the first day of school.

This school year marks the first for Emanuel as mayor and for Boiral as the new head of CPS. But the city's push for first day of school attendance has become an annual tradition.

"Education is education starts with excellent attendance," Emanuel said Tuesday.

His office explained that the lack to school stamping was part of a "comprehensive... campaign to promote strong attendance habits" during the upcoming school year.

"These kids who missed the first day of school were I was a teacher always struggled to catch up," Boiral said at a press conference during the door-to-door event Tuesday.

Emanuel said the private business community has embraced the school district's efforts through "partner" donations.

Walnut Stores Inc. gave \$25,000 for the door-to-door campaign. Clear Channel Communications Inc. has pledged to help get the message out about back-to-school through in-kind marketing. Target Corp. will give \$3,000 to the school in a high-traffic area that has the highest first-week attendance. Harris Bank has signed on with a \$12,000 sponsorship for a back-to-school rally. The company also

helps provide school lunches for the city's public schools. Chertwell-Thompson Hospitality is set to give \$63,000 to purchase school supplies, the mayor's office reported.

"This is a shared goal for all of Chicago and I am honored by the city's commitment to making this important investment in Chicago's future," Emanuel said of the corporate donations.

Aside from the mayor and the school superintendent, a number of organizations have already hosted or plan to host back to school efforts.

The Salvation Army gave away hundreds of backpacks and other supplies during its July 23 back to school event at Cooper Park in the West Pullman community. Present Blindness America announced last month that it declared August to be Children's Eye Health and Safety Awareness Month and urges parents to get eye screenings in preparation for the new school year. The organization says free screenings are available at www.preventblindness.org, www.stappell.org or by calling (800) 331-2020.

Additionally, Merry Hospital will be offering free back to school physicals Aug. 13 at the hospital, 2325 S. Michigan Ave., from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. no appointment needed. For more information call (312) 567-2128.

Saturday, one of the city's prominent community organizations will host back to school events. The

Chicago Urban League will have street games, karaoke and access to free health screenings at its event, which will be held at its headquarters, 4359 S. Michigan Ave. from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. The Urban League's CEO is also a member of the Chicago Board of Education.

"Attendance is the first step to student achievement. It is important that we support and encourage our students to become life-long learners so they can compete successfully in a global economy," said Andrew Zapp, head of the Urban League and a newly appointed member of the school board.

A little further east of the Urban League, River Street Jackson and the Rainbow PUSH Coalition's PUSH for Excellence program will host a back to school rally that focuses on parental involvement.

"Parents are children's first teacher," Jackson said. "This year we are taking particular focus on engaging parents and encouraging them to take an active role in their children's academic success."

Further, the organization will look to have 50,000 parents by Dec. 31 sign a pledge supporting their children in getting an education.

Participants at the Rainbow PUSH event, to be held at the organization's headquarters, 900 E. 51st St., will receive backpacks and school supplies.

School starts Sept. 6 for public schools operating on the traditional school calendar.