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*Press Release*

*Public Schools of Robeson County*

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### **Back to School Celebration expected to bring out thousands**

Boxes of school supplies were rolling in on Thursday, August 1st as the Public Schools of Robeson County prepared to host the *Back to School Celebration*, the school district's largest event of the year. The event, which targets to prepare PSRC students for school, is expected to bring out 20,000 parents, students and volunteers on August 1<sup>st</sup> to the Southeastern Agricultural Events Center in Lumberton.

"It is an opportunity for parents to come out and talk with the superintendent, assistant superintendents, central office staff, as well as school staff to discuss any concerns while collecting school and parent supplies that will help them throughout the year," said Amy S. Haigler, PSRC Parent Coordinator.

Across from Haigler's desk sits a bookshelf with hundreds of books for students and parents. One free item at the *Back to School Celebration* for parents is a homework dictionary. Haigler has the book in Vietnamese, Chinese, Spanish and even Haitian Creole. Her variety shows her desire to be ready for any parent needs in the district.

Haigler said getting ready for school could be labor and cost intensive for parents. PSRC requires students to have a mesh school bag. Haigler said parents sometimes have a difficult time finding the bags and they can be expensive. The celebration eliminates one of the high price items in children's back to school requirements as students received a mesh book bag along with paper, pencils, and other goodies. Parents received a tote bag and an umbrella.

"This celebration began in part because of the economics of the parents and students throughout the district and the rising cost of school supplies as parents try to get students ready for the upcoming year. We discussed those issues with the superintendent, Board members and assistant superintendents and it led us to this idea to help," Haigler said.

Each school had a booth at the celebration, giving parents the opportunity to pick up school requirement information. Translators were on hand for families and child nutrition staff was available to assist parents with applications for free and reduced lunch.

With 20,000 people expected, the event was a major undertaking. One hundred volunteers from the PSRC Central office as well as community volunteers worked shifts to keep things running smoothly. Ralph Delvalle, general manager of the Lumberton Cici's Pizza, planned to volunteer his time by bringing food to the volunteers. "I believe education is an important part of the future of this community. We have to do everything we can for the children to stay in school because the children are our future," Delvalle said.

To handle such a large group, coordinators divided the Event Center into east and west zones. The east zone contained booths for schools in the Lumberton, St. Pauls and Fairmont communities. The west zone of the building included schools in the Red Springs, Rowland, Pembroke, Maxton and Prospect communities.

The celebration ran from 7 a.m. until 7 p.m. to allow working parents to visit. Students who were out of town or whose parents were unable to attend were allowed to pick up their items at their school at a time designated by the principal. Snacks were also provided.

For more info, contact Amy Haigler, PSRC Parent Coordinator at 910.735.2190.