

Community Day

*Pennsylvania School for the Deaf
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania*

Community Day is just that at the Pennsylvania School for the Deaf. Families and students from the school join adults and children from nearby neighborhoods for an annual fair. Community partners donate food and services and more people volunteer every year to make the event a success.

“The administration of our school and our Board of Trustees wanted to have an annual special event that we were known for,” said the school’s family involvement liaison. Now, after three years, that seems to have happened. Nearly 400 adults and youngsters attended this year’s fair, held at the end of April close to the anniversary of the school’s founding.

Among the activities are carnival rides, arts and crafts, street performers, mini sign language classes, information booths, and various vendors. The \$3 admission covers many of the fair’s expenses, though the school assumes about \$2,500 in costs. With community donations, fair planners are able to keep the food prices reasonable so families can afford to attend and enjoy themselves. All booths and activities are made accessible to students with hearing impairments.

“We consider it to be a ‘friend-raising’ rather than a fund-raising activity,” said the liaison. One of the day’s original goals was to build good relationships with the community around the school. “Community Day is for us to have a good time and raise the level of deaf awareness in our community. We want to be a good neighbor,” the school’s development administrator explained.

The school promoted the event in a series of fliers and signs distributed throughout the community. They also sent news releases to local media and e-mails to the school’s distribution list.

A steering committee helped plan the event. Its members contacted local businesses

for donations and recruited more than 100 parents, staff members, and community volunteers to help run information booths, craft tables, and other games. Students participated in the street performances.

Parents, students, and school administrators agree that Community Day has been a great event for the school. All involved were excited to see students with hearing impairments interacting with the hearing community. “This was a great affordable event to bring my children to. My deaf son liked that it was at his school,” one parent said.

Community Day grows every year. The school plans to continue the event, assessing it closely to keep it fresh and inviting.

*Tina Pakis
Family Involvement Liaison
(215) 951-4765
tpakis@psd.org*