

## Family Fun Night

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*Southside Elementary School #93  
Buffalo, New York*

**A**t the close of each academic year, Southside Elementary students gather in the parking lot with their families—and throw pies at the principal! That and the faculty dunking booth are undoubtedly the most fun at Family Fun Night, a chance to celebrate students' accomplishments and let them unwind with food, games, and raffles.

Formerly called Fun Day and held during school hours, the event was moved to the evening so that working parents could attend. Families who RSVP enjoy free hot dogs, soda pop, popcorn, snow cones, and pony rides. Those who do not RSVP pay a small amount at the door to enjoy the festivities. About 1,200 people usually attend.

There are activities galore. Pre-kindergarten and kindergarten students play color, ABC, and number games, while students in grades 1–8 play math, spelling, and science games at booths targeted to different age levels. Every child wins a prize, including a book with a timer to encourage him or her to read for at least 15 minutes each night. Among the other attractions are face painting, bounce houses, and a rock wall. Families can meet clowns and firefighters who bring their truck along. A live band made up of parents performs in front of space made for a dance floor.

The dunk tank and pie-throwing booth are the only ones that cost money. Older students especially are only too willing to pay a quarter to do what they might have dreamt of during class.

A raffle held toward the end of the evening finances Family Fun Night. Each grade level contributes a basket, as do the school and several local businesses. One donates the grand prize. Volunteers sell tickets throughout the evening.

Having held the event for several years, Southside has worked out many of the kinks and runs the event smoothly. Parents and the PTO have bought equipment, such as a grill, coolers, and a popcorn machine, that is used every year.

The school has found a great way to bring its families together to celebrate the end of the year and kick off the summer.

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