UofS students to host second Bonanza for area kids returning to school

BY CAITLIN HEANEY (STAFF WRITER)

Students and their parents can gear up - and even win some gear - to head back to school this weekend at an educational festival in Scranton.

First-year students at the University of Scranton will run the second Back-to-School Bonanza on Sunday from 2 to 4 p.m. on Lackawanna County Courthouse Square, giving kids a chance to learn while also helping to offset the cost of school by providing families with much-needed educational supplies.

Shannon Murphy Fennie, director of the university’s Center for Student Engagement, described the bonanza as "a nice, casual event where (parents and children) can spend a lot of time together really interacting with one another (and) interacting with our students."

"We wanted to make sure students were really excited to be going back to school," she said.

The free bonanza, which Ms. Fennie estimated would be appropriate for children from preschool age to around 12 years old, will mix education and fun. University students will man tables with academic games, like one in which children have to do math to win a prize.

The Bookmobile, Scranton Police Department and Scranton Fire Department also will visit, and kids can stop by a reading area to pick up some free books. And at family bingo, children can win bookbags filled with supplies - donated by various University of Scranton offices and services - they can use at school. Some "amazing community partners" help the university offer the bonanza, Ms. Fennie noted.

The university started the bonanza last year as a way to show first-year students its commitment to community service in action, Ms. Fennie explained.

"We wanted to show the students that that's really important from the moment they step onto campus," she said.

Last year, more students than the university anticipated showed up to help. Around 125 first-year students signed up in advance to volunteer, and another 100 showed up the day of the bonanza. The college students love interacting with the children, who can look to them as examples of what they can aspire to become, Ms. Fennie said.

The bonanza also is "a really nice experience" for new students to see the community in which they will live for the next few years and all that it has to offer, she said.

"It's a really nice experience for our first-year students," she said.

Ms. Fennie also pointed out that the bonanza provides parents with a moment to spend with their children before the hectic time of school, sports and other extra-curricular activities begins in the fall.

"It's a nice way to end the summer (by) just kind of sitting there and talking about what the academic year has to offer," she said.

Contact the writer: cheaney@timesshamrock.com, @cheaneyTT on Twitter

If you go

What: Back to School Bonanza

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http://thetimes-tribune.com/lifestyles/uofs-students-to-host-second-bonanza-for-area-kids-returning-to-school-1.1539697
UofS students to host second Bonanza for area kids returning to school – Lifestyles – The Times-Tribune

When: Sunday, 2 to 4 p.m.
Where: Lackawanna County Courthouse Square
Details: The event is free and recommended for children from preschoolers through age 12. For more information, call 941-4419.

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