

## Englewood Sun Archives

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### Locals pack back-to-school event

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ENGLEWOOD -- Hundreds of back-to-schoolers and parents waited in a line that snaked around the YMCA building Saturday for a chance to get free backpacks, haircuts, physicals and shots.

Some waited an hour outside the Y before the 10 a.m. event started, and by 10:15 a.m., all 400 backpacks were spoken for.

An estimated 1,000 people, including 600 to 700 children, showed up and took event organizers by surprise.

"I'm overwhelmed," said the Rev. Phillip Williams, senior pastor of Suncoast Worship Center, which sent about 50 volunteers to the annual event.

Phillips credited the economy and deepening unemployment with the high attendance.

"The need is greater this year," he said. "There's a lot of people hurting, dads out of jobs. We had no idea the need had risen that much. We didn't know."

Midge Jacobson and her son, Dylan, 14, waited more than an hour for a free physical exam.

"We didn't need **school** supplies but the physicals are valuable to us," Midge said.

Area doctors, nurses, technicians and hairdressers volunteered their time at the event.

By 11:30 a.m., Kristin Straub, an ophthalmic technician with Center for Sight, had examined 50 people. About five had vision issues, she said.

By 11:40 a.m., hairdressers from a handful of local beauty salons had given 100 haircuts, with 50 more waiting in line.

"We could cut every child's hair in Englewood," said Terry VanLeeuwen, a volunteer with Suncoast Worship Center.

Maria Sunblad held a place in the haircut line for her son.

"People are looking for any kind of help they can get," she said. "This is the first year we've come. It's very, very beneficial."

Attendance at this year's Back to **School** Bash was "hands down the most we've ever had," said Marcia Ziegler, membership director at the Y.

The Englewood Y will offer before-**school** care for the first time in the new **school** year.

Scholarship requests for after-**school** care are higher than ever, Ziegler said.

"It's been tough this year, but we're seeing positive changes," she said. "Even the folks asking for assistance say they know things are going to get better."

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