HopeFest ’23 by the Numbers: A Celebration of Community

HopeFest began in 2006 as a way for local community groups and churches to help Reagan High School during a difficult time. At the first HopeFest, 3,000 people and 60 exhibitors showed up for a day of services, music, food and community celebration.

Today, much has changed and much has stayed the same. Reagan, now named Northeast Early College High School, has doubled in enrollment and is thriving. The St. John and surrounding communities, still facing economic and social challenges, have made headway in improving their schools, making their communities safer, and making sure that more families have access to important services.

In its 18th year, HopeFest again attracted a huge crowd (4,200+) and 152 exhibitors, along with 11 performers/groups on our main stage and courtyard area. As Austin’s largest campus-based resource fair, HopeFest maintains its community feel, bringing together schools, community organizations, churches, service providers, businesses and families in a celebration of all that is good about northeast Austin.

Facts About HopeFest ’23

Sponsors: HopeFest is sponsored by Austin Voices for Education and Youth, a local educational nonprofit, in partnership with local community organizations, churches and businesses. Superior Healthplan provided financial support, along with Austin Voices, Covenant Presbyterian Church, Blue Cross Blue Shield of Texas, Young Men’s Service League, Genentech and local businesses. Univision provided promotional support.

Donations: Children’s Clothing (Hope Thrift Store, Young Men’s Service League, local churches); Bicycles (Yellow Bike and Young Men’s Service League); Food (Amaya’s Taco Village); Gift Cards (Young Men’s Service League, Austin Voices); Trees (TreeFolks); Fresh Produce and Food (Central...
Texas Food Bank); Children’s Books (Bookspring); Custodians (Northeast Early College High School and Austin Voices)

**Services Provided:** HopeFest is divided into zones, including a health zone (main gym), health insurance zone (small gym), children’s clothing (auxiliary gym), job fair (cafeteria); Blue Santa (cafeteria), children’s crafts (cafeteria courtyard) family and youth (outdoor gym area), Finance, safety and education (gym courtyard), outdoor children’s activities (old mall parking and practice field), and main stage/food tent. School displays and PTA exhibits were mixed throughout. Least of Saints brought classic motorcycles, Capital of Texas Zoo provided a petting zoo, Takota’s Ponies provided pony rides, Young Men’s Service League provided a bike rodeo and outdoor game area, TreeFolks gave away 500 trees near the main entrance, and Central Texas Food Bank provided food for over 700 families.

Performers include the Northeast Raider Bank, Northeast Nightline Dance Team, Dobie MS Mariachi and Drumline, Webb MS Band, the Aztec Guadalupana de Austin Dance Team, Samantha Acosta (student soloist from Walnut Creek ES), Aida Ortiz, Dallas Shreve Band, Rosa Elena Lopez (Hawaiian and Tahitian Dance Team), and Los Fandangueros de Austin. Rayvon Foster and Tr-Coast Management provided stage and sound.

**A sample of services and activities provided at HopeFest include . . .**

- 1,800 meals were served at lunch
- Fresh fruits and vegetables were provided by Central Texas Food Bank for 700+ families
- Bookspring gave away over 2,000 free children’s books
- 259 families received free children’s clothing
- 500 mature trees were given away by Treefolks
- 95 families registered for Christmas assistance through Blue Santa
- 170 flu shots and 51 COVID vaccinations were given (flu from Austin Public Health, COVID from and CommUnity Care)
- College of Health Care Professions provided free health screenings.
- Dental information and free toothbrush kits and referrals were provided by dental providers, including the ACC Dental Hygiene Program.
- Immunization referrals were made to the St. John Community Center/Austin Public Health.
• Over 200 vision screenings were provided by the Lion’s Club, and Half Helen Foundation provided 14 students received ophthalmologist examinations and 13 free eyeglasses made on-site.

• 259 families were screened for health insurance, SNAP and a medical home by CommUnity Care and the Austin Voices Promotoras. Follow up appointments were made for CommUnity Care and Austin Voices Family Resource Centers.

• Outdoor children’s activities included a bike rodeo provided by the Young Men’s Service League, climbing wall, orbitron, bouncy houses, ponies, kiddie train and sports/games. Over 300 children took part in the children’s craft area, where children decorated mini-pumpkins, made halloween masks and did other fall-themed crafts.

• Capital of Texas Zoo provided interactive activities with farm animals and reptiles.

• Least of Saints provided classic motorcycles for children and adults to hop on for photos.

• Community Hero awards were presented to Austin Public Health, Central Health, CommUnity Care and Central Texas Food Bank for their partnership with the St. John and Rundberg communities to expand immunizations for children and adults, as well as the continuing support by CTFB for weekly drive-through food pantries that serve more than 350 families weekly in the local community. AISD administrators, Trustees and County Judge Andy Brown were present for the awards.

• Northeast Early College High School, Webb Early College Prep Middle School, Dobie Early College Prep Middle School, and Winn Elementary School provided information on early college and other programs. AISD departments, including enrollment, equity and early college, also had displays. PTAs sold food to fundraise. 216 families provided input about their schools and communities at Austin Voices “Promise Neighborhood” exhibit.

• Thousands of other services were provided by exhibitors, including connections to employment and job training by 20 exhibitors in the job fair, registrations for adult education, voter registrations, referrals for housing and utility support, financial and tax counseling, legal assistance, after school programs and much more.

Who Attended: Over 4,200 community members attended this year’s HopeFest, along with 152 exhibitors and 11 performers/groups. Attendees had children at 88 different schools, including 61 AISD schools. 63% of attendees came from Northeast Austin (78752, 78753, 78723, 78758, and 78754). 4% came from Manor. 9% came from South Austin (78741, 78704, 78744). 24% came from 33 other zip codes. Volunteers: Over 350 volunteers helped in a number of ways, including flyering the community, set up, clean up, serving lunch, helping with children’s activities, children’s crafts, assisting in the health, Blue Santa, children’s clothing and insurance zones, and registration. Special shout out to the Young Men’s Service League, which adopted HopeFest for their annual “Ultimate Gift” grant, providing both service and financial support (187 volunteers and 509 hours of service!), including a clothing, baby gear and bike drive, flyering the St. John community, purchasing bikes, gift cards, craft supplies and food for the event.

Organizations that provided volunteers include:

Ahmadiyya Muslim Community
Anderson High School Key Club
Austin Chinese Church
Austin Council of PTAs
Austin Community College
Austin Texas Musicians
Austin Voices Community Block Leaders
Austin Voices Promotoras
Covenant Presbyterian Church
Dell Medical Pre-Health and Diversity Scholars
GAVA
Gamma Sigma Girl Scouts
Hyde Park School
Literacy First
Navarro Early College High School
Northeast ECHS National Honor Society
Texas Angels (UT Austin)
The Food Lounge Austin
UT Austin
UT Austin-Public Health
Young Men’s Service League
Westlake High School
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