

Kids Safety Day provided child ID packets

Sunny skies and unseasonably warm temperatures provided the backdrop for Primary Bank's second annual Kids Safety Day, which was held on Sunday, Sept. 24, at the bank's Route 101 location.

The event, held in conjunction with the Masonic Youth Child Identification Program and Manchester-based Washington Lodge No. 61, presented families with the opportunity to put together comprehensive child identification packets, which could be taken home, kept in a safe place and given to law enforcement officials should their child ever go missing.

A record number of children took advantage of the program at this year's event, according to Dylan Cruess, member of Washington Lodge No. 61 and chief operating officer of Bedford-based TFMoran. More than 300,000 children have participated in MYCHIP since its inception in 1988.

"We had 52 children go through our Child ID program this year. That's the highest number of children we've ID'd during one of these events in over five years," said Cruess, himself a father of a 4-year-old daughter. "We couldn't be happier with this year's turnout. It's wonderful to see more and more families taking advantage of this service, and we're so pleased to be partnering with Primary Bank in an effort to keep our community a little bit safer."

Although similar in content to child identification packages of past generations, which consisted of a physical description, outdated photo and ink fingerprints,

today's kits include a brief videotaped interview with the child, not only capturing the child's image but also their voice and mannerisms. While fingerprints are still collected, children today hold their fingers to an electronic pad similar in appearance to a miniature computer mouse, generating computerized fingerprints. Once the entire 10-minute process is completed, all the data is put into an envelope and given to the parents to take home for safe keeping.

"I'm so happy we had the opportunity to do this with our daughter today," said Kaitlyn Choi of Candia, who attended the Kids' Safety Event with her daughters Emma, 2, and Aly, 6 months, and husband, Andrew, a Manchester police officer. "Emma had a lot of fun and now we have peace of mind knowing we have everything we need to give to the police if we ever need to."

Although child safety is a serious topic, the day itself was filled with fun. The eastern end of the 101 Plaza parking lot took on a festive feel for the day. Max the mascot from the Manchester Monarchs and Fungo from the Fisher Cats both made appearances.

Children had fun in a giant bouncy house and practiced their skills on miniature sports fields before getting their face painted and picking out a balloon animal.

Bedford emergency vehicles, including two fire trucks and a police vehicle, were also available for curious children to explore.

Primary Bank staff handed out fresh-popped popcorn and bottled water, and



Harvest Market employees grilled burgers and dogs.

"We couldn't be happier with today's event," said Bill Stone, president and CEO of Primary Bank. "It's great seeing the community come together and enjoy the day. But the fact that we can have fun like this while providing such a beneficial service to families from in and around Bedford makes it even better. We're just so pleased to be part of this great community."

Dylan Cruess and his daughter, Catherine, 4, took part in Primary Bank's Kids Safety Day. Cruess is a member of the Masonic Washington Lodge No. 61, a co-sponsor of the event.

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