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Children are the focus at the Florida Capitol this week '09 Children's Week highlights advocacy, awareness

By Iricka Berlinger
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Children from around the state hope to leave their imprint on legislators with 100,000 paper cut-out hands.

Each colorful hand in the "Hanging of the Hands" display represents a child hoping to get the attention of lawmakers as they walk through the Capitol Rotunda and see their artwork lining every inch of the entryway to the Capitol. "It looks like children came in and painted the Capitol," said coordinator Lori Seise of Jumpstart Tallahassee, a nonprofit agency helping prepare children for early education.

Volunteers gathered Sunday to decorate the Rotunda for the kickoff to the 14th annual Children's Week, a series of events with a focus on children and their needs. There will be guided tours of the Capitol and advocacy training today, but Tuesday is dedicated to the children.

"Every hand and every smiley face is one specific child," said volunteer Debra Self from Fort Walton Beach. "Hopefully this will help legislators make their difficult decisions."

The display will be dedicated at 9 a.m. Tuesday to the 2009 Florida Legislature and to the steps they take during this year's session toward helping children's issues.

Football hall-of-famer Dan Marino will be on hand Thursday to take part in Autism Awareness Day, with the Inaugural Tallahassee Walk at 9 a.m. and a fundraiser hosted by the Comedy Zone, 401 Tennessee Street, at 8:30 p.m.