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TALLAHASSEE DEMOCRAT

Updated: Children's Week activities attracts large turnout

By Tamaryn Waters

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Hundreds of people, ranging from young children to salt-and-peppered haired adults, crammed into the Capitol's Rotunda this morning to hear what some state officials had to say about issues affecting children.

The press conference was one of many events that attracted large crowds in honor of the 14th Annual Children's Week. Other events including a "reading center" where legislators read books to small children and a town-hall meeting, which allowed middle, high and college students to pose questions to members of the state's Children & Youth Cabinet.

And no matter what issue people came to support, the state's wilting budget appeared to have a direct impact on how well services are and will be delivered to children.

Chris Duggan, chief-executive officer of the Early Learning Coalition of the Big Bend, said she was happy to see the large turnout of people going in and out of the Capitol, many of whom were headed to see a legislator.

But she feels strongly that lawmakers must take care of children's dire needs, such access to affordable health insurance.

"If they don't get what they need now, what kind of adults will they be?," Duggan asked.

Check back for more updates on this story.

Earlier update

A flurry of activities is slated this week with the hopes of highlighting some of the issues affecting children in Florida.

During 2009 Children's Week at the Capital, a press conference will be at 9 a.m. and a "Kids Only" town hall meeting will be from 10 to 11:30 a.m today at City Hall downtown. During the town hall meeting, students will pose tough questions to the state officials who serve on the Children & Youth Cabinet regarding issues affecting Florida children.

Other activities include guided tours at the Capital and a "reading center," which will allow legislators to read books to children.

Check back at www.tallahassee.com for more updates.