

Oct 14, 2007

Help improve the lot of kids in county



Joe Johnson

Be Our Guest
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Attention all parents, teachers, students, grandparents, caregivers, religious leaders and anyone concerned about and committed to the future of children in Henderson County! On Saturday, the United Agenda for Children is sponsoring a "Speak Out for Kids" event. The United Agenda for Children is a three-year initiative led by a coalition of citizens, civic leaders, businesses, government and community agencies that have united to make sure every child in Henderson County is safe, healthy and well-educated. This initiative is a first in

Henderson County and only the second of its kind in North Carolina. It is the goal of this event to ensure that each child in Henderson County grows up healthy, safe and well-educated. The outcome of this day will be a unified voice, vision and direction for the children of Henderson County, provided by those that it will impact the most -- the people. This is a process that started nearly two years ago, and it will certainly not culminate Saturday. There will be tremendous follow-up after the "Speak Out for Kids" event to ensure that the ideas and proposals created during that day are implemented to strengthen the lives of children throughout the county. Let me give you a quick rundown of the event details and what you can expect Saturday: The event will be held at North Henderson High School from 8 a.m. until 4 p.m., with free childcare provided for children ages 12 and under. Everyone will work in groups of 10, focusing on the needs of Henderson County's children, working to create a unified message to help leaders improve the overall conditions of the county's children. You will have the opportunity to voice your opinion on the safety, health and education of our children and what we need to do in Henderson County to make our children safer, healthier and better educated. The event is free and open to the public, but pre-registration is required. You can register online via the United Agenda for Children's Web site, www.unitedagendaforchildrenhc.org, or you can contact the Children and Family Resource Center at (828) 698-0647 extension 110. We must work hard each day to ensure that our children are safe. As the son of a public school teacher, I am constantly reminded that for far too many of our children, the only safe part of their day comes when they attend school. Saturday is the opportunity to offer ideas on how to expand that safety. Our children can only learn well and live well when they live in a safe environment. That safety must stretch from their homes to their schools to their places of worship, throughout their neighborhoods and indeed, throughout Henderson County. "Speak out for Kids" is an excellent opportunity for all of us, the people of Henderson County, to openly and candidly discuss how we can strengthen the safety of our children, which has a direct impact on their health and their education. Together we can make a difference in the lives of our children, indeed our future, in Henderson County. This journey will undoubtedly be a long one and will certainly not be easy; however, an important part of the journey is the "Speak Out for Kids" event Saturday. This will be a challenging and rewarding day for you, for me, the children of Henderson County and every person who participates. Every person counts; every voice matters. I encourage each and every person who is able to pre-register and attend this historic event. We will never regret the investment we make in our children, and now is the time to take action. I will be there Saturday and I certainly hope that you will join me. I will guarantee that you will find this experience rewarding and beneficial. *Joe Johnson is director of public affairs for the Henderson County*

Sheriff's Office and a Leadership Team Member for United Agenda for Children's "Speak out for Kids" program.