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Community bands together for children

The Henderson County community is creating a united action plan on issues involving children, including what steps should be taken so children can be healthy, safe and well educated.

The public is invited to participate at the United Agenda for Children community meeting from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. Saturday, Oct. 20, at North Henderson High School.

About 350 people, including youth, are expected to participate in the interactive, high-tech community meeting. Participants will be chosen to mirror the demographics of Henderson County. Participation is free, but advance registration is required. Call 698-0674 to register.

"We need people from every age group, every background, every income level, and every neighborhood to be included," said Ruth Birge, co-chair of the United Agenda for Children and publisher of the Times-News. "That's key to making this community meeting work."

"This will be a community-wide decision-making process for the entire county," said Renee Kumor, co-chair. "It will be more participatory than anything we as a community have ever experienced before."

Seated at tables of 10 to 12, participants will use wireless laptop computers to share the table's recommendations from each discussion period with the larger group. Additionally, each participant will use a wireless keypad to record individual votes on priorities and next steps. The combination of technologies allows participants to identify and prioritize key concerns thoughtfully and quickly.

Decision-makers and participants will leave the daylong forum with a three-page united action plan featuring the group's top recommendations and priorities.

United Agenda for Children will oversee the development and implementation of the plan. United Agenda for Children will launch an intensive three-year process to make measurable improvements in children's lives in Henderson County. After Oct. 20, participants are urged to stay involved by volunteering for action teams. Participants and the community at large will be kept informed through regular reports on progress made.

United Agenda for Children is a unique coalition of more than 40 nonprofit organizations and public institutions, with the support of the business community and others, who have joined forces to address critical issues affecting youth. United Agenda for Children is spearheaded by the Children and Family Resource Center. The three-year initiative is supported by Henderson County and area municipalities, Henderson County schools and members of the Henderson County business community.