

Sun-Sentinel

COMMUNITY

Families enjoy Plantation temple's fun day More than 500 enjoy open house at Plantation temple

By David A. Schwartz South Florida Sun-Sentinel

September 13, 2009

His black polo shirt was soaked with sweat, but Rabbi Sheldon Harr smiled as he stopped to talk with parents at Temple Kol Ami Emanu-El's family fun day and open house on a steamy Sunday morning.

Braving temperatures in the high 80s and storm clouds overhead, more than 500 children and their parents turned out at the Plantation synagogue.

"You get to know your teacher and then come out and play," Harr said. "It's not just prayer and song; it's [also] social and educational."

Jason Chalik, synagogue president, said, "It's the beginning of the school year. ... [The children] come out and see their friends and share stories about what they did this summer."

Fifth-grader Keren Bitton, 10, of Hollywood, waited with several other children for her turn to drop from a seat into the red dunk tank.

"I was dunked 10 times," Keren said. "It felt so cool. The fun thing about it is you're waiting for them to make you drop. The water was freezing cold."

To help children and adults battle the heat, volunteers from the temple brotherhood chilled 96 bottles of water and 200 cans of soda in ice water. The water sold out, and only about a dozen soda cans were left.

Teenagers at a nearby concession sold more than 140 grape, lime or cherry snow cones.

"It's sweet, cool and crunchy," said Amanda Dorton as she handed the lime-flavored refreshment to her 3-year-old son, Andrew. "He likes the green ones. He likes the fact that his tongue turns green."

Children played in the shallow end of the temple's lakeside swimming pool as a cool breeze momentarily cut through the heat and humidity.

As he waited for his wife and four children to change from bathing suits to street clothes, Yoram Bitton, of Hollywood, talked about the family's morning at the open house.

"We came over to see the new teachers and new friends," Bitton said. "The kids came over, and they are really excited. They liked the classes and teachers."

Chalik said that although synagogue fundraising is down, the temple is still adding to the campus. A new early childhood building opened last year, he said.

"In these difficult times, these families thought that [the temple school] was an important value," Chalik said. "This is the next generation of Judaism."

