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# Community Day provides exposure and partnership

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Ronnie Jackson and EPIC Community Resource Center staff and volunteers pose for a photo during their first annual Community Day.  
PHOTO BY JESS ORLANDO

ENGLEWOOD — EPIC Community Resource Center held its first Community Day on Saturday, bringing local nonprofits to one location.

Organizations that focus on helping people in the community came together at EPIC Resource along North Indiana Avenue in Englewood to not only talk with those who can use its services, but talk among each other.

EPIC CEO/President Ronnie Jackson was happy to see the nonprofits mingle.

“I’ve just about lost my voice talking to people,” Jackson said, chuckling. “I’m very pleased how it went.”

Jesus Loves You Ministry’s s



“We wanted to bring it to let the community partners be aware that on April 8, and every Monday after that, the showers will be available for the unhoused,” he said.

The group will also serve breakfast and lunch on those days. That program is from 9:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m., Jackson said.

“It seems like the nonprofits that I’ve talked were very pleased with the opportunity they had to spend with the other nonprofits and get to know them a little better,” he said. “We had some community people I talked to that were unaware of what we do in the community.”

Jackson said conversations yielded appointments with EPIC to help find resources for those in need.

“We plan to have it again next year, but it won’t be on Easter weekend,” Jackson said, laughing. “Overall, a great day.”

Englewood Helping Hand President Karen Harvey provided information on its food-related services. The nonprofit has been serving the community since 1983.

“Our clients are homeless, and working class people in the Englewood area both the Sarasota and Charlotte counties,” Harvey said.

Its pantry is at the Englewood Methodist Church campus.

Some of the resources Helping Hand provides are groceries, referrals and utilities assistance.

“We also give them two grocery bags every other week plus a freezer bag, and we have a background program called Backpacks For Hope which we give to our campers,” she said. “The backpack is filled with a medical bag, personal bag and a general bag.”

Inside those bags include flip flops, bug spray, blankets and socks.

“We just got 1,000 pairs of Bombas socks donated,” Harvey said. “Socks are the No. 1 thing campers want.”

Jubilee Center Administrative Manager Laura Roy provides similar services as Helping Hand.

The food pantry is open to Englewood residents between 10 a.m.-noon on Mondays, Tuesdays and Wednesdays. A free clothing closet is also open from 9:45 a.m. to 11:45 a.m. Tuesdays.

Recently, a partnership between EPIC, Jubilee Center and Florida Health Department yielded beneficial results for a community bike ministry that is open from 10 a.m. until noon first Tuesday of every month.

“Last month we serviced approximately 900 residents in Englewood,” Roy said. “There’s just tremendous need in our community for food because everything has become so expensive, and they’re having trouble making ends meet.”

Some assistance is provided with FPL and water bills as well.

Roy was pleased with the first Community Day.

“We have all the annual nonprofits out educating the public in terms of resources available in the community,” she said. “There really is something here for everybody, today.”

Individual-oriented organizations like the [Englewood Lions Club](#) was available as well to discuss what the club does in the community. Gary Nieskes is a member of the club.

“We’re one of the few Lions Clubs that has a clubhouse anymore,” Nieskes said. “We’re over 100 years old.”

Nieskes said the club doesn’t focus primarily on building things for the community. Instead, they focus on the individual, health, the youth and disaster relief.

“We’re not in business to build community parks, although we have done that,” he said. “We are in the business of disaster recovery, and we did a lot this year just like many others have.”

He said it was important to incorporate the youth, especially in an area like Englewood.

“Our community service is aimed more at the individual.”

Nieskes said that every penny earned from the public has to go back to the public.

[Englewood Community Care Clinic](#) Executive Director Beth Harrison provided information on medical resources for those without insurance.

“Our clinic is run by volunteer doctors and nurses with about 16 physicians and nurse practitioners, and about 20 nurses who see patients every Monday and Thursday night,” Harrison said. “Today gives us a chance to build awareness in the community about our services, and that we exist.”

The clinic has been in operation for 13 years in Englewood, but not everyone knows it exists.

“It amazes me that people still don’t know what we do, and where we are,” she said. “It’s just a great opportunity to get the word out.”

The newly formed [Englewood Creative Arts](#) is actively promoting itself to build awareness around the arts oriented organization.

“We wanted to get in, enjoy the day with people and get the word out,” ECA Community Alliances Director Jeff Dillon said. “I’ve been doing a lot of networking, and people are calling me now.”

The organization wants to provide affordable and accessible arts for all ages within the Englewood area.

“It’s to pick them up, and give them some kind of creative arts skill as we’re moving forward,” Dillon said. “If they choose to do it for a living that’s great.”

No matter the circumstance, skills such as drawing, painting, theater, writing and other talents can be used in facets of life.

“Our main mission again is providing positive role modeling, and positive environmental experiences so we can help keep them off drugs,” he said.

