

BACK TO SCHOOL

Mayor's event likely to be economics lesson

With recession, officials expect record numbers at fair today

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The stage is set. Now, it's time for the students.

The Automobile and Centennial buildings at Fair Park were bustling Wednesday in preparation for the 13th annual Mayor's Back To School Fair, open from 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. today.

At the fair, parents and their children will be able to get dental and vision checks; screenings for cholesterol, diabetes and blood pressure; free immunizations; and free haircuts. School supplies will be given to families who are eligible under federal poverty guidelines.

About 7,000 have pre-registered for the event to help them avoid lines, but thousands more are expected to attend. You can still register this morning upon arrival. Officials estimate that as many as 55,000 could attend, up from 48,000 last year.

"We anticipate that school supplies may run out," said Becky Mayad, communica-

tions director for the event, noting that record numbers are possible because of the down economy.

Families that qualify for supplies and do not get them at the fair will be given vouchers that they can use Aug. 18 between 8 and 10 a.m. at City Hall Plaza.

Inside the Centennial Building on Wednesday, there was the hiss of helium as balloons were filled. Outside in the heat, children and high school students rehearsed on a stage for Already Gear's fashion show — a new addition to this year's fair.

"It's pretty hectic, but good,"

said Joyce Green, the fashion show coordinator.

A number of social services will be on hand to aid parents, and students can receive a free book after attending the inaugural Book Nook and Storytime with Dallas Mayor Tom Leppert. He and others will take turns reading to students.

On Wednesday, volunteers helped unpack 15,000 books donated by Half Price Books. Groups involved in putting up the Book Nook and Storytime include Habitat for Humanity and the Junior League of Dal-

las.

"It's a great way to promote each organization's education initiatives," said Paula Blackmon, the mayor's deputy chief of staff. "Reading is fundamental."



FILE/Staff photo

Students and parents looked over the books available during the 2007 Mayor's Back To School Fair at Fair Park. People can still register for this year's event today.