

Legislators line up for taste of Blue Springs 'Showcase'

**By Scott Williams
Of The Examiner**

JEFFERSON CITY — Blue Springs brought its small-town political charm to the state capital in a big way Tuesday, playing host to dozens of lawmakers and hundreds of others in the city's largest lobbying junket ever.

A delegation of 50 community leaders, seeking to bolster the city's image, converged on the Capitol just before lunch and filled the halls of government with the aroma of a catered barbecue luncheon.

The goodwill mission was intended to be larger than past lobbying excursions to Jefferson City, but "Showcase on Blue Springs," as Tuesday's effort was tagged, became a mega-event.

The scene, a modest-sized meeting room on the first floor of the Capitol, exploded in a wild wave of activity, attracting everyone from government VIPs to janitors and seeming, at times, to overwhelm the local par-

ticipants.

"It's a zoo," one of them said, shaking hands and passing out gifts in the carnival-like atmosphere.

Organizers later estimated that 500 people showed up and ate \$3,000 worth of lunches, received \$750 worth of Blue Springs souvenirs and pushed the event's cost over budget.

School Superintendent Charles McGraw, who conceived the "Showcase" idea, said he thought the event was a success and ought to be repeated next year.

"I think everybody was really pleased with the exposure and the big splash that we made," he said.

Among those in the local delegation were City Administrator Fred Siems; Deputy School Superintendent Gene Dexter, who also is Chamber of Commerce president; City Planner Karen Gable; Economic Development Commission President George Tyree; City Attorney Bob McDonald; Blue Springs Campus Director Paul Thomson; Central Jackson County Fire Chief

Phillip Hahn; four aldermen, and five school board members.

A disquieting lull that briefly pervaded the scene after the group arrived was shattered at about 11:30 a.m. as the General Assembly prepared to adjourn for lunch.

The constant flow of people at first consisted almost entirely of secretaries, raising fears that lawmakers were dispatching surrogates and planning to skip the event themselves.

Although organizers had vowed to resist the temptation for heavy-handed lobbying, invitations were sent to all 197 legislators in hopes of making some important new friends.

A staffer who showed up from the Department of Conservation said the Blue Springs group might be disappointed, because their event came during an unusually busy period of the legislative session.

"It's pretty hot and heavy right now," staffer David Hurlbut said.

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