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Help Me Grow Alabama holds free child development screenings in Dothan

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By Rae Larkins, Reporter CONNECT

DOTHAN, AL (WSFA) - Help Me Grow Alabama is connecting families to health and developmental resources. Monday afternoon, organizers provided free "Ages and Stages" Developmental Screenings for children five and under.

The screening measures how children play, learn, speak, behave and move. The goal is to make sure they are ready to start school healthy and ready to succeed. The Help Me Grow child development program focuses on children under 5 years old. At Monday's screening, children completed several activities to test their skills.

Parents also answered questions about their child to identify strengths and areas where they need more support. Lisa Smith brought her daughter to the free screening Monday.

"We play a lot of activities. I read to her, we sing, and we do a lot of stuff outside, activities. She loves to throw a ball, so looks like she might be a ball player one day," Smith said.

According to child development experts, nearly 85 percent of brain development occurs in the first few years of life, before entering kindergarten. Eighty percent of the brain is wired for learning by age three.

There were 30 questions for parents to answer. Organizers also provided activities, just in case they couldn't answer the questions.

"It just shows them where their child is compared to other children their age. If there is any concerns or red flags we'll then talk to them about letting their pediatrician know about those. We can also refer them to early intervention programs," Help Me Grow Alabama, Wiregrass Regional Care Coordinator, Will Francis said

If you have questions regarding this program or your child's development, behavior health or learning, dial 2-1-1 for further information.

If concerns are raised, parents will be provided information on appropriate services in that area and free follow-up care. Help Me Grow Alabama is funded by the Alabama Department of Early Childhood Education through the Preschool development grant, the Alabama Department of Human Resources and the Alabama Department of Mental Health through Project LAUNCH grant from the substance abuse and Mental Health Services Association.

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