

# Police Community Unity Day to be held Saturday

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Thursday, July 21, 2011

COLUMBIA — A free family day with state and local law enforcement will be held from 3 to 7 p.m. Saturday at Brittlebank Park.

The event, Police Community Unity Day, is hosted by Sen. Robert Ford and Rep. Wendell Gilliard, both Charleston Democrats, and the Charleston Police Department's Weed and Seed program.

Music and food will be provided. All are invited.

Fingerprint and DNA kits will be available for parents to keep on record should their child go missing.

The event will also serve as a distribution point for Project Cool Breeze, which will provide 150 seniors with air conditioning units during the event. Seniors can qualify for a free air conditioner through the city's Weed and Seed program at 720-1987, Gilliard said. He started the program in 1999.

If it rains, the event will be moved to the St. Julian Devine Community Center, 1 Cooper St.

The state's top law enforcement officers are invited, including retired State Law Enforcement Division Chief Robert Stewart, current SLED Chief Mark Keel and Col. Kenny Lancaster, interim director of the state Department of Public Safety, as well as Charleston County Sheriff Al Cannon and other local officials.

Gilliard started the event 12 years ago to create a dialogue between the state, law enforcement and local residents. Everyone can use the time to network and build a better future, he said.

The event is one of about a dozen projects that Ford and Gilliard collaborate on each year.

Ford said the event is a chance for children to interact with law enforcement officers in a positive way.

"It's a wonderful picnic atmosphere," Ford said.

About 30 individuals, businesses and government entities sponsor the event. They include the Charleston County Sheriff's Office, Harold Dukes, the Children's Cancer Cooperative, Charleston Coca Cola Bottling Company, Lowe's, Piggly Wiggly, Citadel Communications and APEX Broadcasting.

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