

Free Market draws a crowd

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"It was just amazing," Dale West said of the "Free Market" the First Baptist Church put on last Saturday.

She said the huge fellowship hall was "crammed full" of things, and the project employed "every table the church ever owned."

"I cannot even begin to estimate the number of items that were given away," she said.

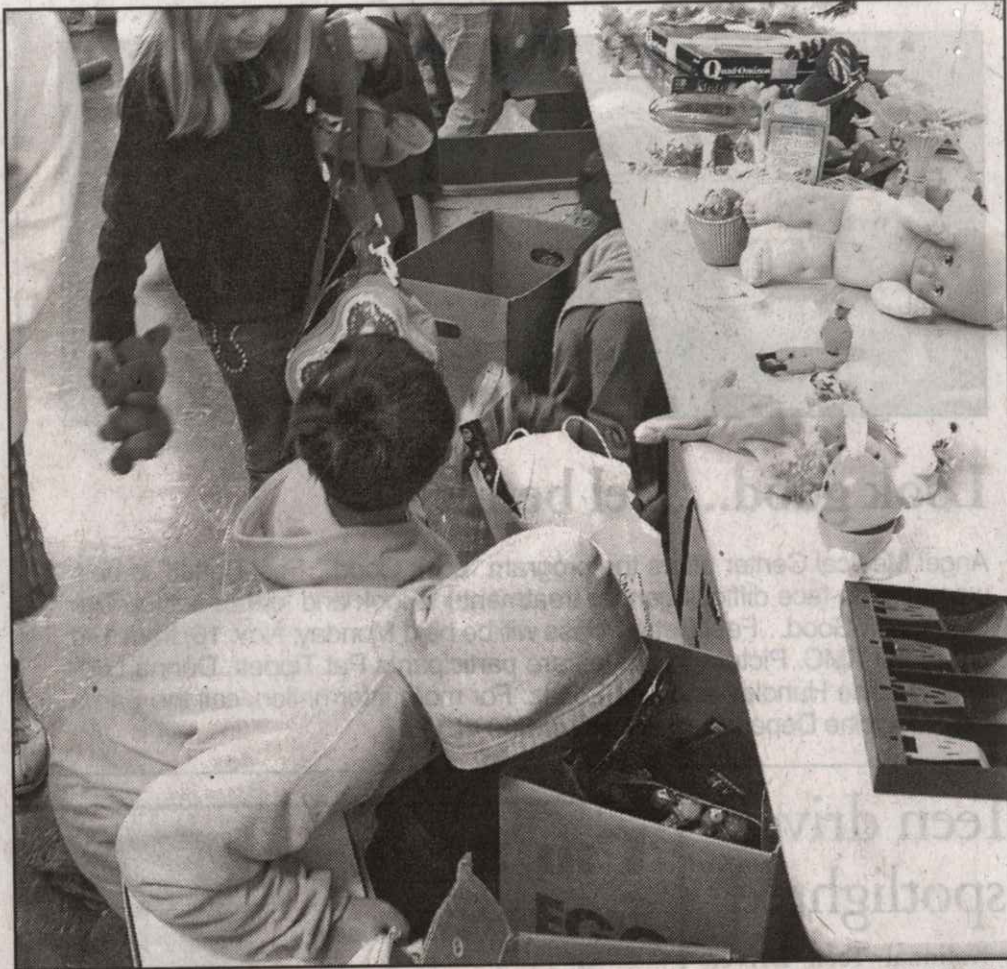
The event was a sort of yard sale, but everything was free and people could



Press photo/Linda Mathias

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Hundreds of folks find just what they need at First Baptist's Free Market.



Press photo/Linda Mathias

Children search through boxes of toys to find just what they've been hoping for.

Free: Event brought smiles all-round

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take whatever they wanted. Items included winter clothing, blankets, household goods and toys.

West, who was one of the organizers of the event, estimated that 250 people came. "Everything was so orderly, so calm," she said. "Nobody was grabbing anything, they were just taking what they needed."

The event was scheduled to start at 9 a.m., but people were lined up outside at 8:30,

so the organizers decided to open the doors for them.

Within two hours, almost everything was gone.

One woman got a free sofa that looked brand-new, as well as a matching loveseat.

She told *Press* photographer Linda Mathias that she didn't have any furniture.

"The idea came about as we have become increasingly aware of the numbers of our neighbors who have been affected by the difficult times we are currently experienc-

ing," West said. "We all determined that we have been blessed with more than we need and decided the best way to solve that was to give it away."

The market made a lot of people happy — but none were happier than the group that organized it, West said.

"In sharing of the blessings God has given to us, we were the ones blessed by the folks who came today. Their gratitude and smiles were enough to make it all worthwhile," she said.