

'Littles' waiting for more 'Bigs' to volunteer

By Sharon Corcoran

slcorcoran@nwkansas.com

They're all dressed up, waiting for someone to pick them up for the game, to see a movie or even to bake cookies.

Some have been waiting a long time and will likely be waiting quite awhile longer. Twenty-one girls and 11 boys in Goodland are waiting for a Big Brother or Big Sister to take them out for fun, visit them at school, talk, play games, even help with homework.

Big Brothers Big Sisters of Sherman, Wallace, Logan and Cheyenne Counties has been busy matching youngsters with mentors, but the supply of mentors in Sherman County has come up short.

"We are always needing more Bigs," said Executive Director Sarah Thompson. "A lot of volunteers graduated from high school last year, and a lot of the kids they were mentors for are back on the list."

The organization would like to have a volunteer to help in the office. Thompson said she had a secretary provided through an organization that provides part time work for retired people, but they moved her to another job.

People come by for an application or call to ask questions, she said, and no one is here.

"I'm out of the office a lot," she said, "to attend meetings, run errands and make home visits for potential Bigs."

Thompson has been busy planning events to get the Bigs and Littles together and to raise money. They had a pumpkin painting party Tuesday, where the Bigs and Littles, the organization's board members and potential volunteers got together for fall activities, including painting pumpkins and bobbing for apples.

The pumpkins were pretty amazing, Thompson said; they were very artistic.

"I'm not sure which they enjoyed more, painting pumpkins or bobbing for apples," she said. "Some of the kids put their whole heads under water. They had a lot of fun."

The group had a sloppy joe supper and Halloween dance Friday with Brennen Clouse, a junior at Goodland High School, as the disk jockey. Witches, spooks, a bumble bee, a cheerleader, a dead prom queen, a psycho butterfly, Scarlett O'Hara and even "Peter" the pan showed up to eat and dance.

On Saturday, Nov. 17, Big Brothers Big Sisters will be getting into the Christmas spirit for their next fund-raiser. Businesses and organizations will decorate Christmas trees in the window of the former Aten Department Store.

About 4 p.m. on Nov. 17, after the Christmas pa-

rade downtown, the organization will auction off the trees, hold a silent auction for Christmas decorations, sell Christmas goodies and serve refreshments at the store.

"I'm hoping it will get more people to the parade," Thompson said. "The kids always put a lot of work into their float."

The groups will decorate the trees the week before, she said, so people can see them ahead of time.

The organization is planning a Miss Merry Christmas and Mr. St. Nick contest. The kids' photos will be on jars at the Goodland Public Library beginning Thursday. People put money in the jars to vote, Thompson said, and whoever raises the most money wins. The winners will be on the Big Brothers Big Sisters float in the Christmas parade, she said.

Children ages 5 through 12 are eligible. Parents need to bring a photo of their child to the Big Brothers Big Sisters office at 330 W. 17th as soon as possible.

Anyone interested in being a Big Brother or Big Sister can call Thompson at 890-3665, stop by the office or e-mail sthompson@ksbbs.org.

There are Littles from age 5 through teenagers waiting for Bigs, Thompson said; some want to be in the "site-based" program, and others want to be "community based."

Site-based means the Big visits the Little at his school, she said, for lunch and recess or to help with homework. They visit for 30-45 minutes once a week, she said, so it's something people can do during their lunch hour.

Community-based matches spend a couple of hours a week, three to four times a month, together, she said, and youngsters are matched with Bigs according to their needs.

"We don't match them based on how long they have been on the waiting list," Thompson said, "but on who is the most appropriate match and likely to be a long-lasting match."

Having common interests is one factor that is considered, she said, and women are matched with girls and men with boys. There are five women going through the process to become Bigs right now, she said, and usually the ratio of volunteers is three women to one man.

There are 19 matches in Sherman County, she said, and 43 total for Sherman, Cheyenne and Wallace. The organization is in the process of adding Logan County, she said; there are volunteers going through the process to be accepted as Bigs, and the elementary school principal in Oakley has sent referrals. The group is working on getting a couple of grants to pay for making matches in Logan County, she said.



Shaina Varney (from left) as a Psycho Butterfly, Kegan Nothdurft as a "dead prom queen," Jeremy Brown as Peter the Pan and Keegan Bowling invented their own dances at the Big Brothers Big Sisters Halloween dance Friday.

Photo by Sharon Corcoran/The Goodland Star-News

Sorority wants used instruments to equip fifth graders

By Ramona C. Sanders

rsanders@nwkansas.com

About 40 fifth-grade students entered the Goodland school district band program this year. But more than 65 were interested in joining, said district band director Deanne Spanier.

"We are losing kids because we don't have the instruments to provide them," Spanier said.

That's something the members of Rho Beta sorority hope to change with their "Tuning Up Tomorrow" program.

The all-women community service group is asking the community to either contribute a used musical instrument for students in the band program or to make a monetary dona-

tion to help refurbish contributed instruments or ones the district already has.

"Our goal is to put a band instrument in every fifth-grader's hands who want to play an instrument, said Rho Beta member Karen Hooker.

The fifth-grade is when students are eligible to enter the school district's band program.

The sorority hopes to have a complete library of musical instruments ready for students to use by next summer. All donated instruments will be given to the band program to be reused each school year.

"It's absolutely wonderful what they're doing," said Spanier. "When they contacted me about the possibility of doing this, I was

just ecstatic. This will help the beginning students get into an instrument."

So far the group has received about six instruments, said member Joy Hayden. She said their small library consists of a French horn, baritone, trombone, clarinet, flute and drum set.

But many more instruments are needed. There are about 140 members in the school band, Spanier said.

While the district has some larger, more expensive instruments such as a tuba to loan students, smaller or less-expensive instruments must be supplied by the students' families.

Hooker said the group decided to help out when she saw her son's classmate become

so disappointed that she could not be in the band because her family couldn't afford an instrument.

A musical instrument can cost between \$800-\$1,300, Spanier said. Instruments also require yearly maintenance, which can cost \$60-\$120.

"I told them about this little girl and how it really touched me," Hooker said of her next meeting with her sorority sisters. "(The mother) couldn't provide that education for her daughter."

The group voted to donate half of its treasury and came up with the "Tuning Up Tomorrow" idea. Since then several fundraisers have helped Rho Beta raise additional funds for the program.

In addition to the musical instrument library, the group would also like to provide funding for the maintenance and refurbishment of instruments. Instrument refurbishment costs about \$125.

The Kiwanis Club has signed on to help out. President Bruce Gleason has agreed to engrave the donor's name on the instrument or on the case.

"We're asking any organization in Goodland who is interested to help out," Hayden said of the monumental task of providing instruments and maintenance for the more than 140 students. "It isn't something we can do on our own."

To donate an instrument or contribute monetarily, contact Hayden at 890-2554.

Cyclist sees where he's been as he pedals across the country

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about making money, he said; they do not care about the seriously ill. Not one of the dispensaries has contributed financially to Wright's push for a federal law allowing the medical use of marijuana, he said.

"It is important for people with chronic pain, AIDS, cancer and diabetes to have access to the drug," Wright said. "I am willing to die for the cause."

Wright admits biking backwards is bizarre, but it catches attention for his causes. Another reason he bikes backward is to see what is coming from behind.

Wright said he and a friend were biking backward from Valley Center to Wichita, when a drunk driver hit the friend and knocked him in the ditch.

"He flew like a rag doll," Wright said. "I thought he was dead, but I resuscitated him. He had permanent brain damage."

Once his friend was on the way to the hospital, Wright was sitting in the back of a sheriff's car, when a second drunk driver came along and hit the back of the car.

"I hear all these stories of people being hit from behind in cities," he said. "I know about bike safety."

Wright has been riding on the

shoulder of Interstate 70 where possible but wasn't able to get approval from the Kansas Highway Patrol to do so here.

"I don't understand why I get no support from law enforcement in Kansas," he said, "when biking backwards started here. I wish I had support in Kansas. It would mean the world to me."

Another thing he wants is for people to learn from his mistakes.

"I didn't practice safe sex," Wright said. "I didn't practice the things I should have, but now I have to preach them. If anyone thinks they can't get the virus, they should know it's alive and well."

He is calling attention to the plight of the homeless. There are 93,000 homeless people in Los Angeles County, he said, and they're herded like cattle.

"As I've crossed some of the cities," he said, "I have talked to the homeless — they feel they are not accepted into society because they do not have money. It disturbs me that we can feed people all over the

world but not here. In California, they ticket the homeless and chase them away from tourists."

He plans to put his issues before Congress even if they try not to hear him.

"They tend to be lame ducks," Wright said, "and try not to hear what I have to say. If that is the case, I will camp on their step. I will fight on these issues."

"History is being made as we speak — backwards across America."

To help pay for Wright's ride across the country, send checks payable to Curan Wright to Common Ground — HIV Community Center, 2012 Lincoln Blvd., Santa Monica, Calif. 90405. Call (310) 314-5480, extension 132. His web site is www.bikingbackwards.net.

Ferret plans face new legal challenge

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periment would continue for five years, after which, it may be terminated or continued indefinitely depending upon success and the cooperating landowner desires.

Written comments must be submitted by Nov. 19, to the Assistant Regional Director, Fisheries-Ecological Services, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, P.O. Box 25486, DFC, Denver, CO 80225-0486, or by fax 303-236-0027.

Copies of the draft Environmental Assessment and application are available by visiting <http://mountain-prairie.fws.gov/species/mammals/blackfootedferret/>, or by calling the Service's Mountain-Prairie Regional Office at 303-236-4256.

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