



A guide to

by Chris Harper

The young Mexican American boy clutched the butter-brickle ice-cream cone between his hands. After a few bites his mouth was surrounded by white and pieces of brickle while the ice-cream dripped down onto his fingers.

He looked across the table and gave an appreciative smile to his Y-Pal, a UNL sophomore.

This scene is repeated in more or less similar form every day. What makes it possible are the more than 30 volunteer organizations available for student work through the Student Volunteer Bureau (SVB).

"Students can grow from giving" SVB Coordinator Mary Dean said. "Giving and growing are a very integral part of volunteering. Volunteerism isn't for everybody but it's an important part of learning. It provides a 'doing' kind of educational experience."

SVB works with more than 45 community agencies in coordinating the activities, Dean said. These programs include projects with youth, the mentally disabled, the elderly and low-income persons, she added.

The SVB office, "offers students a clearinghouse. We serve as a liaison between the University and the community," Dean said.

How does a person volunteer? He completes a registration form and an interview in order to assess the student's interests and to determine an appropriate assignment, Dean said. She added that although time involvement varies with each project, the usual commitment is between two and three hours a week.

Most of the community projects involve nine months but other short-term endeavors such as Christmas programs are available for volunteers, Dean said.

Lack of transportation might pose a problem for prospective volunteers, she said. The coordinator, however, added that students may use the two SVB vans for their projects.

SVB's goal: "A good volunteer program eventually works itself out of business," she said. "Kids are just trying to plug into the existing resources in the community."

"Do volunteers promote social change? I think they can if volunteers are used properly," she said. "There are things that volunteers can do that other workers can't do."

The SVB office is located in Room 338 of the Nebraska Union. Students also may call 472-2486 if they are interested in any of the following programs: