

Costume party helps deaf children interact

By AMANDA SCHINDLER
Staff Reporter

As youngsters lined up last weekend awaiting the judge's decision on the best costume, they giggled and squirmed as children do.

When the winner was announced, a little boy in a multicolored jack-in-the-box costume shyly stepped forward. Instead of applauding, though, his companions shook their hands in the air. The boy understood, and he grinned. He knew they were clapping for him — clapping in sign language, that is.

Saturday afternoon, hearing impaired people of all ages came together at Grace Lutheran Church of Lincoln at the annual Halloween party sponsored by the University of Nebraska-Lincoln student group Friends of the Deaf Community.

The event, in its fourth year, was organized to provide an opportunity for positive interactions for the deaf community, said Jennifer Herzog, a senior deaf education major and president of the FDC.

Participants enjoyed various activities throughout the afternoon, including cookie decorating and pumpkin painting. The games provided the children a way to socialize with one another and

"know that they are not alone," said Cody Dusenberry, a senior physical education and deaf education major and FDC vice president.

It was also an opportunity for students to practice their signing skills and meet members of the deaf community.

"There's nothing like signing with a deaf person — you learn so much from it," said Kaci Holmes, a freshman deaf education major.

About 30 Lincoln children attended the event along with their parents.

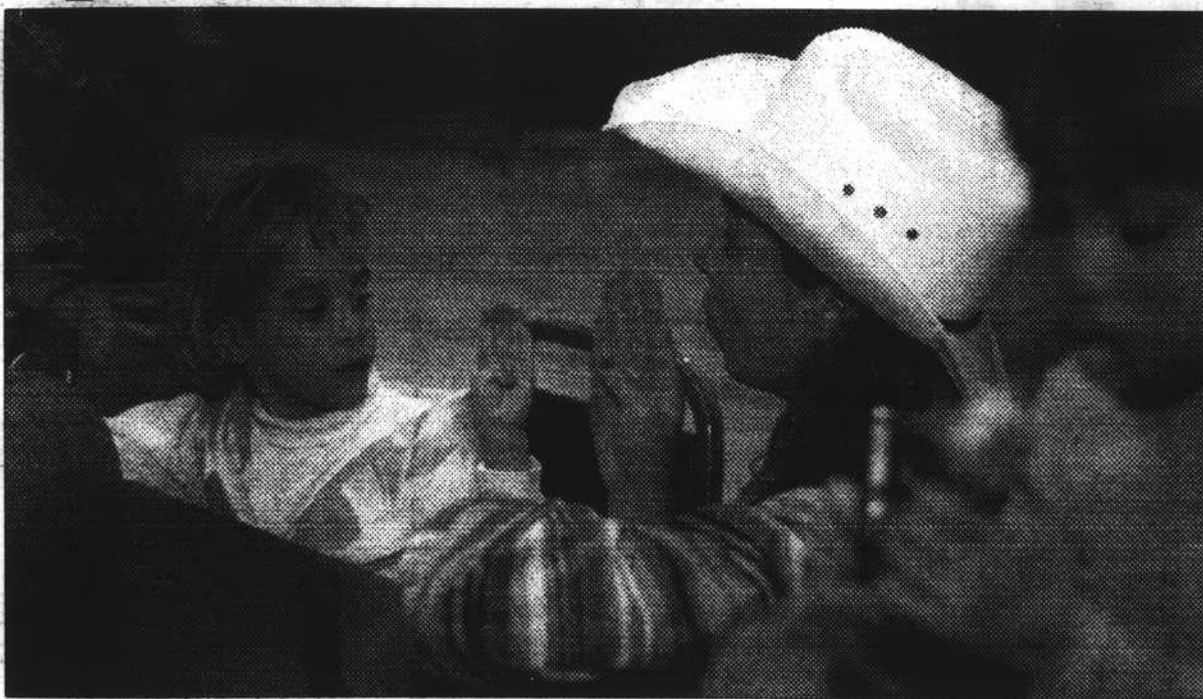
Mark Hessler, father of 4-year-old deaf triplets Sarah, Michael and Amy, said he attended the party because the children "need to make friends with their deaf peers. They need that exposure to their culture."

Doug Druliner, whose daughter is hearing impaired, said that as deaf children are usually a distinct minority, the Halloween party was a great chance for children to get out and be with others.

Druliner's daughter, Erin, a fifth-grader at Prescott Elementary School, had fun with both hearing and deaf friends in her colorful pirate costume.

Her father said she has to "straddle the two cultures. She reads lips a lot, and her speech is amazingly good."

But as Erin said, "understanding people is harder now that I go to a mainstream school."



TALKING SILENTLY, CODY DUSENBERRY, right, and Sarah Hesser, left, paint pumpkins during the Halloween party sponsored by the UNL Friends of the Deaf Community at Grace Lutheran Church Saturday.

Eighth-grader Jonathan Scherling said he once attended the Nebraska School for the Deaf in Omaha, the only such school in the state. He no longer attends that school and said he misses

it. "Some of my friends don't really talk to me very much," he said. "You can smile (at each other) and that's it." All students are welcome at the

FDC monthly meetings, and sign language proficiency is not necessary, Herzog said. The FDC's next meeting is Nov. 4. For information, call Herzog at (402) 472-7271.

Program aims to promote literacy

■ Make A Difference Day volunteers read to children around Lincoln.

By SARAH BAKER
Assignment Reporter

The wide, innocent eyes of attentive children who love to hear stories were plentiful Saturday as UNL student volunteers took part in Make a Difference Day.

Higher Education Nebraska Reads — Make a Difference Day, which promotes children's literacy, came to the University of Nebraska-Lincoln Saturday and was sponsored by Student Involvement.

The event gave UNL students, staff and faculty members the chance to read to a child for 30 minutes at one of seven volunteer locations around Lincoln.

Student Involvement collected both used children's books and donations toward the purchase of children's books last week. Since the turnout for donations was originally low, Student Involvement set up a donation booth in the Nebraska Union to try to generate more interest.

Liz Rand, a graduate student with Student Involvement who was at one of the volunteer sites

Involvement

Saturday, said interest in donations increased during the course of last week.

"We got more and more donations throughout the week," Rand said. "We were able to send books to all of our community sites for children, so we felt good about that."

Rand said other parts of the program also turned out well. "We had a good turnout of student volunteers," she said. "The reading response was great."

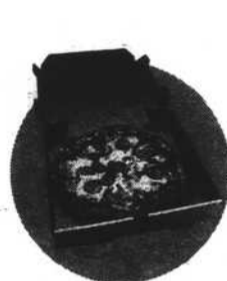
There were about 10 volunteers at each site, and the volunteers took turns reading stories to the children.

Sophomore biology major Heather Root, who is a member of Alpha Phi Omega service fraternity, volunteered to read as part of a project for her organization.

"I think it's really important to give kids a good basis on reading so they can learn to read themselves," Root said.

Senior psychology major Justin Fisher, who is also in the service fraternity, agreed.

"Activities like this are really important," he said. "It helps teach these kids the importance of reading."



Pizza



Tuition

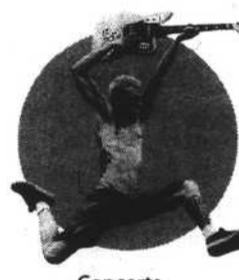


Dentist

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