

Community reaches out to help others



SHARON KOLBET/DN
WHILE THE REST of her family builds and sands wooden blocks, young Meaghan Muehling spends some time playing with the newly made toys.

BY TINA HARGENS
Staff writer

The holidays are a time for giving, not just to your close friends and family but also to the less fortunate.

The University of Nebraska-Lincoln and community members are working to help every family have a happy holiday season.

Several organizations on campus have already set up clothing drives, and others are planning to start their projects next week. The clothing, toys and food items will be given to area charities such as the Salvation Army and the Make a Wish Foundation.

"Each organization does something a little different," said Erin Fujan, a junior agribusiness major from Phi Mu Sorority. "There are so many charities that need help, it would be impossible to name them all."

Phi Mu is joining Alpha Chi Omega Sorority to organize the Third Annual Christmas Tour of Homes.

Every UNL sorority is invited to participate by decorating the first floors of the houses. On Dec. 5, community members can buy tickets to tour the homes. All proceeds will go to the Children's Miracle Network or the Rape and Spouse Abuse Crisis Center.

Other UNL organizations are also planning projects for charities.

Elizabeth Ormsby, vice president of the Residence Hall Association,

said several residence halls are having canned food drives in their lobbies. During the last week of November, the Harper-Schramm-Smith Complex and Sandoz Residence Hall will have bins to collect the food.

Ormsby said RHA is working with the Student Impact Team to sponsor the Angel Tree project.

Community members and students are given the opportunity to pick up a tag with a gender and age of a child at the Nebraska Union.

Participants can buy gifts that cost between \$10 and \$15 and return them by Dec. 18. The gifts will be taken to the Salvation Army until a toy store is set up where parents, who normally wouldn't be able to afford toys, can pick out items for their children.

Jodi Harper, chairwoman of the Student Impact Team, said the Association of Students at the University of Nebraska has joined the effort.

"Working with ASUN gives us a chance to reach more students," Harper said. "We are always looking for help."

Harper said those students interested in handing out tags can contact RHA.

Community organizations and businesses are doing their part to help out fellow community members during the holiday season.

The Lincoln Police Department is collecting merchandise from area businesses to be auctioned. The proceeds will be used buy toys, food bas-

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-Jodi Harper
 Student Impact Team chairwoman

kets and other items for families in Lincoln who cannot afford the items.

The police department also worked with the Home Builders Association of Lincoln to build toys for needy children.

The association invited community members and their families to attend the Builders Blocks workshop held Saturday at Lincoln Northeast High School.

During the workshop, participants built and painted wooden boxes filled with blocks. Other toys, such as birdhouses and gingerbread men, were also made.

Nadine Condello, executive vice president of the association, said the workshop was a great opportunity for community members to spend time with their families and help those less fortunate at the same time.

Holiday depression affects many people

BY MARGARET BEHM
Staff writer

Winter break is a break for many students from the worries of class, grades and university life, but for some students the break can be an introduction to family problems, loneliness and depression.

Local counselors said depression has many causes, and it can be hard to trace those to one specific time period, such as the winter holidays.

"Students will have more free time during the holidays," said University of Nebraska-Lincoln Counseling Psychologist Marty Ramirez. "This may cause them to notice issues they were too busy to notice before."

Students can also become stressed because they do not know how to deal with upsetting holiday situations, Ramirez said.

"We encourage students to seek any necessary help wherever they are during the holidays if they become stressed or depressed," Ramirez said.

Another cause for depression this time of year - Seasonal Affective Disorder - is not caused by personal problems but by exposure to less sunlight, Ramirez said.

Support groups, such as Recovery Incorporated through Westminster Presbyterian Church, are an affordable way for students to seek help.

"If students come early in their life, then they can avoid spending their whole life suffering from extreme

symptoms," said Barbara Fox, a member and former leader of Recovery Incorporated.

Steve Bivins is an emergency service worker at the Community Mental Center of Lancaster County, 2200 St. Mary's Ave., where people can call if they need help.

He has noticed that calls to the center increase during the holidays.

"We get more calls during the holidays," said Bivins. "But there are more people doing less, and I don't know if you can correlate it to more depression or more free time."

Students who want to find out about depression can turn to the University Health Center for assistance.

"We like students to come in and visit with us about their stress," Ramirez said. "Then we can figure out if it is a serious problem that needs treatment."

Students can take a 10-question quiz at the health center that determines if they are suffering from depression, Ramirez said.

Bivins encourages people to be aware of the warning signs of depression.

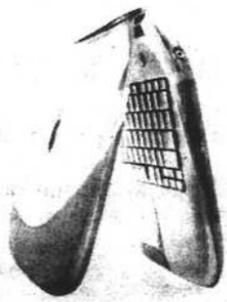
The main warning signs are loss of appetite, not sleeping well and lack of ability to focus, Bivins said.

The difference between being sad and depressed is the length of time you have endured the grief, Bivins said.

"In general, sadness is a short duration process," Bivins said. "If it lasts a couple of weeks or longer, and it's impeding on your life, you need to get it checked out."

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