Holiday volunteers bring cheer, spirit to families

People can donate time in a number of ways: rocking babies, mentoring and setting up holiday decorations.

BY VICTORIA RIIS

A little gift of hope can go a long way for a child at Cedars Youth Services.

Cedars is a non-profit organization that provides support, shelter and special care to more than 11,000 children in Lincoln.

Located at 620 N. 48th St. in Lincoln, the center needs more help than usual during the holiday season.

Rhonda Saunders, a development associate at Cedars, said University of Nebraska-Lincoln students and staff can give in many ways.

Volunteers can donate their time by rocking babies, being a mentor or setting up Christmas decorations, Saunders said.

The center also accepts donations in the form of Christmas gifts for children.

"I think it is amazing, the lives you can touch," said Saunders.

Kelly Peterson, director of communications at Cedars, said the center is not just for young children.

The Transitional Living Program helps young adults who need assistance with independent living, Peterson said.

"The program needs mostly socks, t-shirts and personal items," Peterson said.

The newly renovated Cedars Home for children ages 4 to 14, located at 6601 Pioneers Blvd., needs board games, basketballs, videos and books, Peterson said.

The home provides emergency shelter, daycare and other services all under one roof.

Saunders said Cedars is always looking for assistance with video productions, web site creations, renovation work for buildings and landscaping.

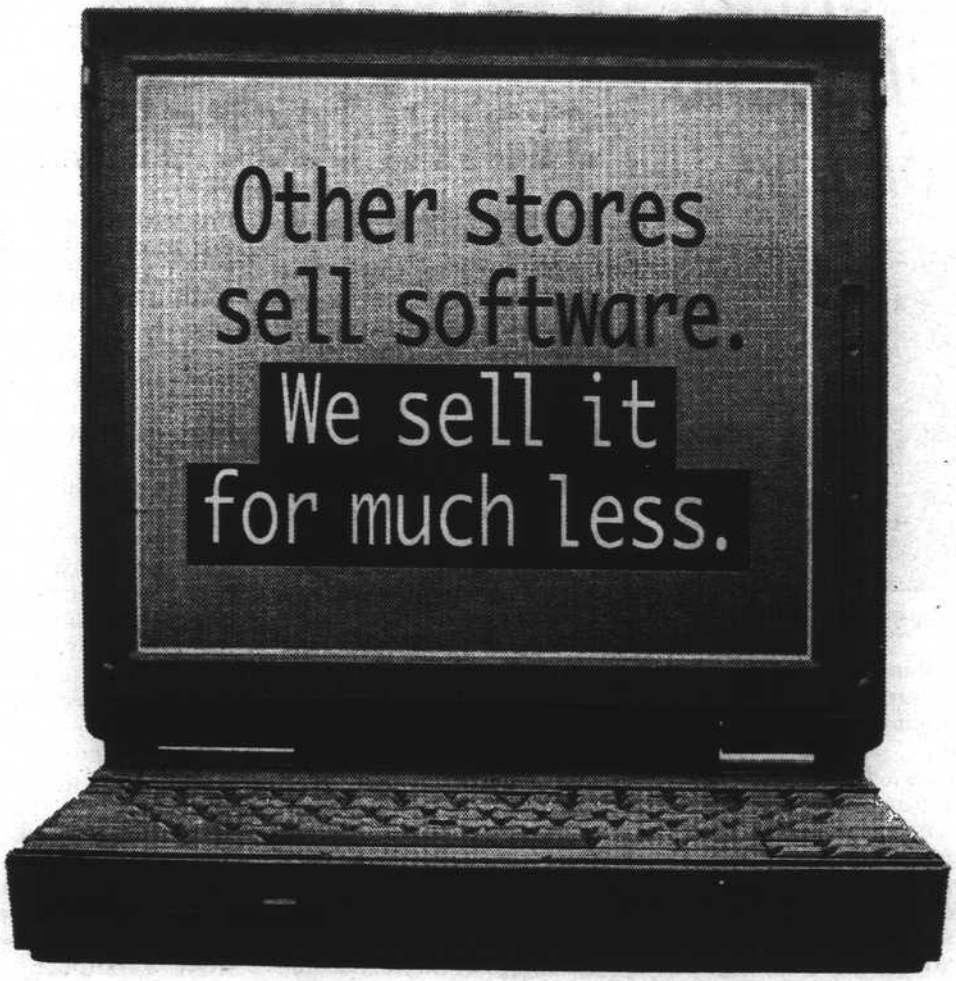
Christmas shopping is another way to help Cedars.

On Dec. 21 from 5 to 9 p.m., the Ten Thousand Villages gift shop, located in the Haymarket at 140 N. 8th St., store will be donating a portion of its proceeds to Cedars, Saunders said.

"Even if we give 100 percent we could give more," Saunders said.

The community is resource rich, and in a perfect world the needs of the children would decrease, Saunders said, but instead the needs are increasing.

Saunders said the best way to find out more about volunteering or giving gifts to the children at Cedars would be to call (402) 434-KIDS.



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