

Advocates for Children

GFWC Juniors' Special Project, Advocates for Children, was adopted to give all clubs an opportunity to participate in projects that benefit children of all ages. Clubwomen can become advocates by working to:

- Ensure children are protected from harmful situations
- Encourage healthy physical and emotional lifestyles
- Impact policy to improve children's lives

Chairwoman: Florence

Committee Members: Janet, Sylvia, Mary, Robin, Lynn E, Lynn F, Gayle, Linda B, Debbie, Nicole, Jody S, **Barb H**

CASA – Florence, Debbie, Judy S, Diane, Florence, Lynn, Barb H

Medical Chairwoman: Vicki Riesinger

Florence, Jude, Gayle, Janet, Barb

Making a December to Remember at Youth Services Center

By Karin Green and Rena Bucher

The Youth Services Center in Billings provides a temporary home for youth 12-17 years old who are in a crisis situation and have no place to live. It also has a separate locked unit for youths who are suspected of a crime or are a danger to the community or themselves.

The month of December has several activities that focus on the youth. The club has an annual Christmas Dinner. During the dinner, a fund raiser is held for the Youth Services Center. This year members were asked to bring "Ugly socks" filled with Christmas delights. A silent auction of the socks raised \$370. Three hundred went to a Special Events Fund at the center and the other \$70 went to the library project. Just before Christmas youth that must stay in the facility over are taken shopping. Seven youth were each given a \$30 Target gift card and went shopping. Seven members enjoying shopping with the youth.

The Advocates committee sponsors a tree at the YSC. Every year in December members bring items to the center to put on the tree. Youths have an opportunity to choose an item every day from the tree. Members also bring cookies, hot cocoa and other goodies to share with the youths as they visit with them.

A few years ago, several new members (who just happened to be librarians) walked over to the YSC library to check out the books. They noticed the deplorable condition of the books, the outdated materials and books that were not suitable for the age level of the youths. After securing some money from Advocates the members set out to rescue the library. First they had to discard all the unusable material (18 boxes of discards!) then replace them with age appropriate reading books and classroom materials. Donations of books for the YSC are also received from club members and the Billings community. To date, over 500 books have been added to the YSC library. The staff and students are very appreciative of the support to maintain the library for them.

Every few months the library is re-stocked with new fiction and non-fiction books to appeal to various reading interests and levels. Girls seem to like chick-lit and vampire books, while boys tend to like the sports, military and more action books. Both enjoy current popular books, especially series books and books that have been made into movies.

Future plans are to continue maintaining the main library and to start cleaning up the shelves in the lock-up unit. Most of the books are in deplorable shape and need to be replaced with newer, updated, and more suitable reading materials. Since the youths in lock-up are confined, they are heavy library users as they have few recreational options. **Reading has made a tremendous impact on many of them, turning non-readers into readers.**

The Family Tree Center fundraiser - Each year our club decorates a tree with books and toys to be auctioned at the Festival of Trees Gala Event. Family Tree Center received a monetary donation \$400 to further their parenting education program.

Youth Service Center (YSC)- Each year at Christmas hygiene items and small activity items are hung on the YSC for their residents. Members bring treats and spend time with the children. YSC brings residents to Target. **YSC Target** - Each year residents that do not go home for Christmas are taken to Target and given a gift card for \$30- \$35 to spend on friends, family or themselves. Members accompany each resident. 1681 **YSC Library** A library with age-appropriate books was set-up the YSC and is being maintained. Residents

may take the book with them when they leave.

Pillowcase Dresses – Dresses are made from new or gently used pillowcases and distributed in the spring to the title schools in the Billings area. 150-175 dresses are packaged with a new t-shirt, new underwear, and a small-donated toy. Members deliver and dresses are distributed at the school's discretion.

CASA – Court Appointed Special Advocates – Judy, Florence, Diane, Debbie, and Barb. BJWC sponsored a hole at the CASA golf tournament and is a Gold sponsor for a team of four bike riders in the Yellowstone CASA Bike Ride for \$500. Members serve as CASA's.

Billings Clinic Activity Bags – Children that are in the hospital more than two days are given a bag with activities like puzzles, card games, color books, coloring tools, and a book.

Clothing for School Children – Sweats, used jeans, underwear, socks, and snow gloves are purchased for school that need to keep these items on hand. They are delivered when a school makes a request.

Medical – money for prescriptions and medical emergencies for children and families is donated by request from school nurses and/or counselors.

Donations – Summer camps, summer activities, and All-City Graduation Celebration