

ADVOCATES FOR CHILDREN

BARBARA HOGG/ FLORENCE DIEDE

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School Medical: Jessica Newby

Florence, Gayle, Barb, Janet, Jude

- **FAMILY TREE CENTER**

The Family Tree Center's mission is to prevent child abuse and neglect in our area. BJWC donates \$300. to provide refreshments and other food items used during parenting classes.

The Family Tree Center's yearly fund-raising event is The Festival of Trees, held the last week in November. This event includes a Gala Dinner and Tree Auction, Family Activities, Tea in the Trees, Craft Sale, and opportunities to walk among the decorated trees.

Again, this year BJWC members decorated a tree to be auctioned, with proceeds going to the Family Tree Center. This year's tree was decorated with 110 bears in Buffalo plaid vests and 140 children's books. Our tree sold for \$2,400., the third highest money earner.

Tea in the Trees is a Style Show and Tea. The afternoon features beverages, homemade cookies, (donated by our members) and a Style Show, directed and emceed by a member. Other members modeled Holiday clothing from a local department store.

- **Pillowcase Dresses**

156 pillowcases were transformed into sun dresses for Kindergarten and First Grade girls in 13 city schools. Each dress was packaged with a colored t-shirt, cute underwear and a toy.

Members collected gently used pillowcases, lace, ric-rack, ribbon and other embellishments, t-shirts and underwear were purchased during the year, taking advantage of super sales.

One member loaned her basement sewing space to this huge project. On 3 "work" afternoons there were members operating 5 sewing machines, a serger. Some members were cutting out dresses, some ironing, others packaging. Members were encouraged to spend as much time as they wished with the group on these "work" afternoons. A meal of soup, bread and dessert kept the workers nourished and productive.

Take home kits were available at monthly meetings for members who were unable to attend "work parties."

When the dresses were completed they were boxed and labeled for individual schools. Members delivered the dress packages along with a letter thanking the school staff for distributing dresses.

- **School Medical**

School Nurses see children with medical needs that cannot be covered by CHIP or parents' insurance. A program has been developed and funded to help cover these outstanding expenses. Examples of previously funded items are: prescription medications, hearing aids, lice shampoo, battery operated combs to eliminate lice nits (eggs), and recently the fund purchased a voice recorder for a blind boy undergoing radiation. His teachers and friends record messages to comfort him during procedures.

School Nurses receive requests and forward them to the point person, a school secretary. She polls the committee members for a consensus, if the committee agrees the item is purchased and given to the student.

- **CASA**

Six BJWC members are CASA'S - that is the acronym for Court Appointed Special Advocates. Yellowstone County serves 924 kids in foster care. 278 have a CASA. 646 are waiting for a CASA.

CASA professionals provide many types of training for the volunteers. Once a month judges, attorneys, guardian ad litem and/or court workers are invited to spend a lunch hour with volunteers at the CASA office. This is always time well spent learning of the many issues faced while trying to meet the needs of individual children AND still comply with the law.

One member is a peer coordinator for new CASA's. Two members host small groups for monthly training. One member serves as a CASA for those participating in Drug Court.

During summer, each CASA continues dedicated work tracking the care given and resources needed for each assigned case and to help the many children in foster care in Yellowstone County.

Several pillowcase dresses were donated to the CASA office for a CASA to distribute to a needy child. A boy's coat, 6 pairs of gloves, several pairs of pants, several tee shirts, socks and panties were donated to an elementary school. BJWC made a \$500. donation to further this program

- **YOUTH SERVICE CENTER**

The Yellowstone County Youth Service Center/Juvenile Detention Center houses youth who need a safe place to stay. These youths are not incarcerated or in foster care; but for whatever reason they need safe housing. The center has beds for a small number of youth who stay for a short time while establishing a stable living situation.

BJWC donates funds for outside activities (movies, skating, etc.) throughout the year. Members have established a library for use by residents. Some of these books are read and returned, some are taken with youth when they move on. Books are replaced and updated as the administrator and committed members determine.

At Christmas BJWC donates items for a 'Hygiene Tree.'" This tree is decorated with shampoo, mittens, word find books, ear buds, toothpaste, deodorant, etc. Youth living at YSC during the month of December choose one item daily. Extra items are used during the rest of the year to supplement youth's needs.

After the tree is decorated members meet with residents for Christmas goodies and` conversation. Staff report this is an activity the youth enjoy.

Most of the residents have a place to go for the holidays, those staying at YSC are treated to a shopping trip at Target. Youth are paired with a member and possibly their husband to spend about an hour shopping. Each youth is given a \$35. gift card to use as they please. Some buy gifts for others, some buy things for themselves, some save part of the money for another time.

- **We love our Daycare**

Pooh's Too is the Daycare housed in a building owned by BJWC. Rent from this facility is the main source of income for the club to fund the many projects undertaken during the year.

One member collected and ordered items to fill 120 gift bags, another member ordered 144 pairs of children's gloves, two members made red or green fabric bags. Each child attending the Day Care received a bag with a book, gloves, a small toy, and a sweet and salty treat.

- **OTHER DONATIONS**

This year we have not been asked to supply nearly the quantity of clothing as in past years. Thus, we have a few more funds that can now be used to assist other areas in our community.

Landon's Legacy. \$300. Landon's Legacy has been created to raise awareness and support for boys and their families who have been affected by Duchenne Muscular Dystrophy. The goal is to create an easily accessible ball field for handicapped youth. Billings Parks and Recreation has donated the land at the Poly Vista Complex. Billings Kiwanis had partnered with Landon's Legacy. Landonslegacy.com

Tumbleweed. \$300. Tumbleweed can always use our assistance with so many homeless youth in our area

Shot@Life: \$300. Immunization that will save lives are provided for children around the world. GFWC International is in a Partnership with Shot@Life.

Department of Billings Parks and Recreation: \$300 Our donation will help provide scholarships for youth to attend active camps this summer

We donated \$500. to the All City Graduation Program to help all three high schools host a safe graduation party.

Narrative

Youth Service Center Project

Each year at the club Christmas Party we raise money for the Youth Service Center.

The Youth Service center has two sides, one is the lock up facility where youth are being detained for a criminal act. The other side is sometimes called Family Stabilization. This facility has beds for youth who need a place to stay for a short time. They may be waiting for a placement in Foster care or some other service, or just need some time away from family to re-group. They are not locked up, but are supervised, fed, housed and counseled.

The funds we donate, \$300. go to support extra activities like movies, skating, treat nights, or special events. Many times, there are free passes for the youth but nothing to pay for the supervisors. Without our donations to pay for adult passes the youth may not be able attend. Any extra money raised at the Christmas Dinner Has been used to support the Youth Services Library.

The Youth Service Center had a "so called" library for the kids to use. Our members found this library to be in bad shape, only a few badly worn books and few if any current authors. Several of our members, retired librarians, set out to revive this library. Many members donated books, books were purchased from the Public Library Spring sale AND we had enough remaining money from Christmas fundraising to purchase even more materials for the library. There are now several iPads, some ear buds, movies and other library materials.

If the youth aren't finished with a book they are encouraged to take it with them when they leave, hence, the collection is constantly in need of replacements and current materials. Youth and staff comment, the Library is being used and kids are enjoying READING.

Previously I mentioned the club Christmas party. Traditionally members bring gifts to be used for a silent auction, these gifts are often "White elephants". Silent bidding takes place during dinner and then a "live" auction finalizes the purchases. There is always some stealing of gifts, with the fund-raising theme in mind. In addition, games are played, also in the fund-raising spirit. Candy canes were sold for \$5 each allowing members to participate in a Heads or Tails Game. Members stood and chose heads (touching their heads) or tails 9 (backs). A coin was tossed and if correct members remained standing until a winner was chosen. Christmas Bingo was also played and prizes were given for each game. It is always a fun event.

When this project began years ago the goal was to raise the \$300. for the activities fund, now each year is a contest to see if we can raise more money than the year before. The past 4 years have been very successful, this year's total was \$852.

Another traditional activity BJWC shares with the Youth Service Center is the Hygiene Tree. Personal hygiene items like shampoo, soap, toothpaste and toothbrushes, etc. are purchased by the club. At the November meeting members prepare these items with ribbons and bows to hang on a Christmas Tree provided by the Center. Resident youth choose an item from the tree daily during the month of December. There are always plenty of items left over to fill their shelves for use later.

The really fun part of this tree Youth Service Center project is the delivery. On a Saturday morning in early December a group of members take the hygiene items and decorate the tree, then we have Christmas treats, cocoa and hot cider with the kids in residence that day. It is a time for visiting, telling silly jokes, and launching the holiday season. The kids and staff always tell us how much they enjoy this time. (Especially if we bring peanut butter fudge.)



The final Youth Service Center Christmas activity is shopping. On one of the last evenings before Christmas, members and husbands meet the youth who will be staying at the Center over Christmas Day. Each youth pairs with a member to spend a \$35.00 gift card furnished by BJWC. The rules are simple... use the money to purchase gifts for themselves, friends, or family. This year there were six youth who were said to be the nicest most polite group ever. Members report a most rewarding evening.