

Helping:

Friendship meets demands of disabled

Friendship is the main objective of the YWCA's exceptional friendship program, which strives to meet the needs of physically handicapped and mentally retarded youths ranging from ages four to eighteen.

The program is designed to give disabled or handicapped children the opportunity to form a close friendship and to explore the community and its facilities. The children are referred by private homes, foster homes, regular schools or special educational schools.

Anyone from a junior in high school to a college student, as well as young working men or women, married couples and retired citizens, are encouraged to take part in this program, which offers a one-to-one relationship with a handicapped person. No special training or experience is needed for volunteers. The main concern is that they are interested and sincere about being a friend to a disabled person.

Volunteers are expected to meet with their friend three hours weekly for six months. Those who continue in the program may keep the same friend year after year. Some volunteers who have left school are still maintaining the relationship.

practical experience," explains program co-ordinator Cindy Charapp.

Big Brothers, Sisters lend time to youngsters

"The idea is not to become a therapist, but to become a good friend," explains Don Freeman, campus co-ordinator of the YMCA's Big Brother-Big Sister volunteer program. The program, which serves children from ages 5 to 14, aims at providing a special friendship.

The origins of the YMCA program began in 1964 when the Whiteaker Elementary School recruited college-age people to help children in a friendship relationship. The number of volunteers kept rising, reaching 30,000 hours of donated time in 1971. It is being principally funded by the Eugene School District 4J.

Campus co-ordinators Freeman and Pat Lashway, who work with campus volunteers and children from the immediate area, are placing special emphasis on recruiting. "A lot of people think they are either too old or too unqualified to be of help," says Lashway. "We need to branch out

The recreational program, founded in 1969, was originally a private program run solely by

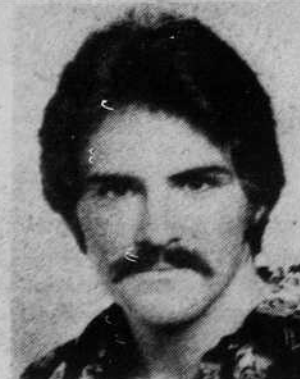
"I'm beginning to see the payoffs of a year-long involvement," explains Freeman, who is a Big Brother to 13-year-old Jim Mills from Jefferson Junior High School. "I can see the change in our relationship over the year. It's incredible." Freeman adds.

Lashway is presently living with four youngsters, two of whom are in the process of being matched up with a big brother or big sister. "As soon as they are matched, I'll get my own little friend," Lashway says.

volunteers. It was introduced to the University in 1972 when an employee for the Eugene Parks and Recreation Department recognized a need for the Big Brother-Big Sister program. The recreation department, along with YWCA, is presently funding the program.

Volunteers are still needed. Those interested can obtain applications and reference forms at the YWCA office in Gerlinger lounge.

For those interested in starting an exceptional friendship elsewhere, handbooks will be for sale soon. An audio-visual presentation will be available for rent in late October. These resources were made possible by a grant from the Northwest Special Educational Learning Resource Center.



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By participating in the exceptional friendship program, University students receive SEARCH credit through the special education department. Bi-monthly meetings, designed to help volunteers learn about physically handicapped children, are required, along with contact reports, which give volunteers an opportunity to share their experiences and problems.

"Not only does it give the volunteers the opportunity to gain a better understanding and respect of people with disabilities, but it is good

and get some older volunteers." There is presently a need for approximately 100 volunteers.

"You don't have to have a lot of experience," Lashway says. "The staff is here to back up those relationships." One goal that the Big Brother-Big Sister program is pushing toward is matching up as many youngsters as possible in relationships that will be long-standing and beneficial. In order to assure the child a friendship in which he won't be let down, volunteers are asked to meet with their youngsters once a week for three consecutive terms.

The Program of the Year isn't on TV. It's in the Air Force ROTC.

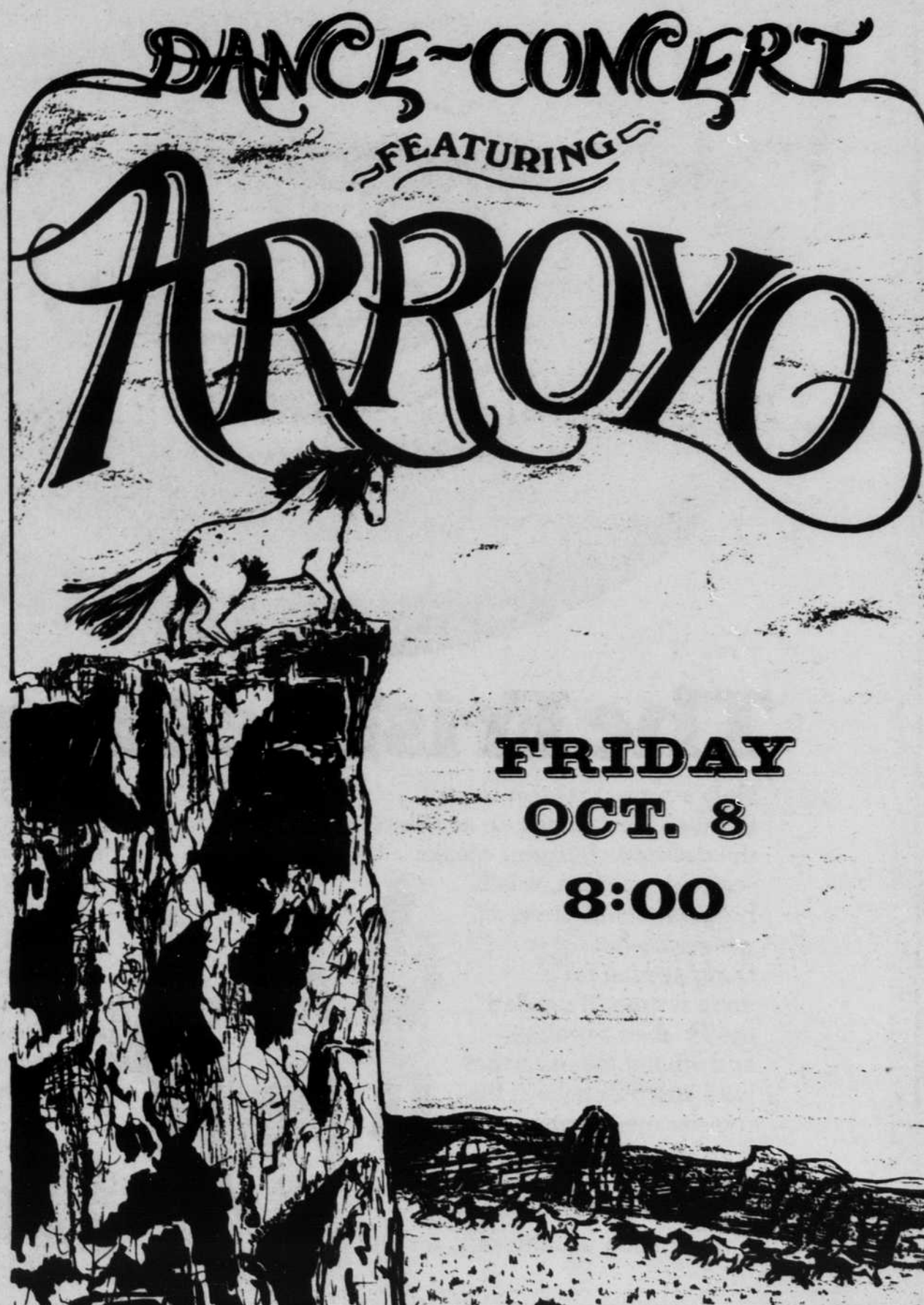
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