

## In the Big Brother/Big Sister program

# Students find a 'little' change of pace

By Diana Elliott  
Of the Emerald

Shelly and Sandy Means remember the day they met their twin little sisters, Heidi and Heather. Although the Means sisters are not related to the 10-year-old twins, the four are bound by a relationship they deem just as close.

Sandy, Shelly, Heather, and

Heidi are all involved in the campus Big Brother/Big Sister program, a creation of the YWCA.

The program, now in its 17th year at the University, matches 60 to 75 University students each year with little brothers or sisters from single parent families.

The children (referred to as litle) are chosen by recommendations from teachers, counselors

and sometimes parents. They range in age from five to 14 years old and come from grade schools, middle schools and high schools in the 4-J school district. There's even a program in which deaf children are matched with big brothers and sisters who can sign or are also deaf.

The program "aims at bringing a positive influence into the lives of

like a long-lost relative comes along and their whole world opens up," Givi says. "The bigs bring the University to the litlets, which is a world they never knew before. They get so excited," she says.

A dose of excitement is exactly what Heather and Heidi got when they were invited to Sandy's sorority for a formal dinner.

that because he appreciates the time we spend with them."

When asked to sum up the rewards, most bigs will say the gratification that comes with being a child's friend is the biggest return, but there are others advantages.

"I think many students want a little brother or sister because they are separated from their real little brothers and sisters at home," Higgins says. Still, others do it because they just want to help and make friends with a child in need.

Unfortunately just caring about children doesn't automatically qualify a person to be able to help. Givi is especially worried about University students who pledge their time, only to realize that they can't follow through.

"Students have to really think it through, before they commit themselves," she says. "It can be very upsetting to a child if his or her big brother or sister often cancels out. This just tells the child that he or she is not important. And that can be detrimental.

But sometimes the situation is reversed and the little isn't around when the big comes to pick the child up. "This is also rare and is usually a result of a parent who feels threatened or perhaps jealous of the big," Givi says.

But for the most part there are few problems. Givi attributes this to the thorough screening process Higgins insists on.

First potential big brothers and sisters fill out applications and list at least three references. Applicants then are interviewed for at least an hour by Higgins. "I like to get to know each applicant, but I also want to make sure the ap-

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**'It's like a long-lost relative comes along and their whole world opens up' — Carol Givi**

kids who are living in a negative situation, having recently moved or suffered a divorce or death in the family," says Carolyn Higgins, campus coordinator for the program.

"We see this program as a last ditch attempt to save a violent or problem child," adds Carol Givi, a counselor at McCornack Elementary School.

So Givi seeks litlets who are either extra shy or "squirrely" and just need a friend to give them some attention. "I try to keep my eyes open for kids from low income housing who don't have other options," Givi says. "They are just regular kids who need a larger view of the world because their view is restricted by time and money."

Although big brothers and sisters (referred to as bigs) aren't meant to be babysitters, Givi admits the program gives parents a needed break. "It gives the parents time with their other children," she says. "Also, single parents can get awfully worn out and their resources can become limited," she says.

This is where the bigs fit in. "It's

"The twins are real tomboys so it was fun to dress them up and bring them to dinner," Sandy says.

"Once they got over the shock of wearing dresses they were fine," Shelly says. "They got a lot of attention from Sandy's sorority sisters and they loved it."

But not all the benefits go to the litlets.

"I get at least as much out of this program as Heather and Heidi do," Shelly says.

Sandy agrees. "I really didn't have many expectations at first, but now I realize I'm getting much more than I ever anticipated."

"You really learn what it means to be a parent," Shelly adds. "And you learn how to apply all the theories you learn in psychology class."

Both Shelly and Sandy think they offer a feminine influence on the girls they can't get at home because the twins live with their father.

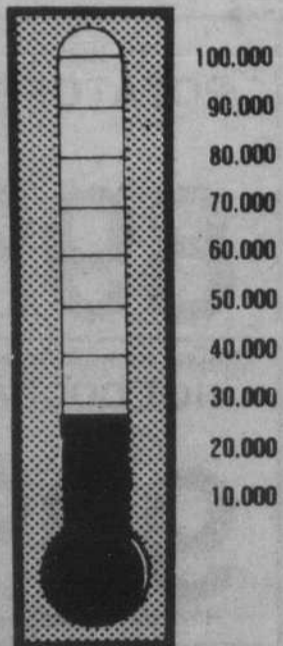
"Their father really is great with the girls," Sandy says, "but he can't help them buy clothes or bake cookies. I think he realizes



Graphic by Shawn Bird

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### TELEFUND STATISTICS



On 10/25/83 22 Delta Gamma Volunteers received 172 pledges for a total of \$3,690.

First, second and third place for most pledges received are held by:

- 1st. ROTC - 371
- 2nd. Delta Gamma - 172
- 3rd. Alpha Phi - 158

That brings the total for the telefund to \$27,903.

Tonight Kappa Sigma will attempt to set a new record for total pledges received.

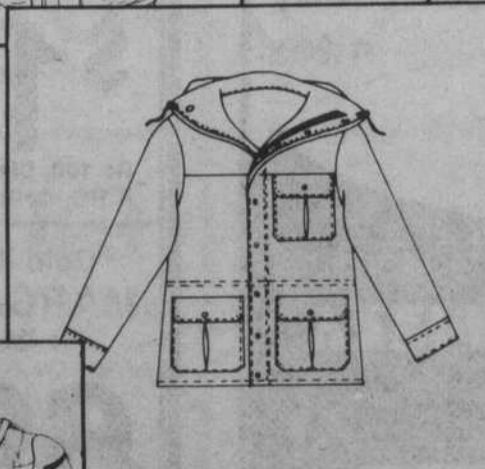
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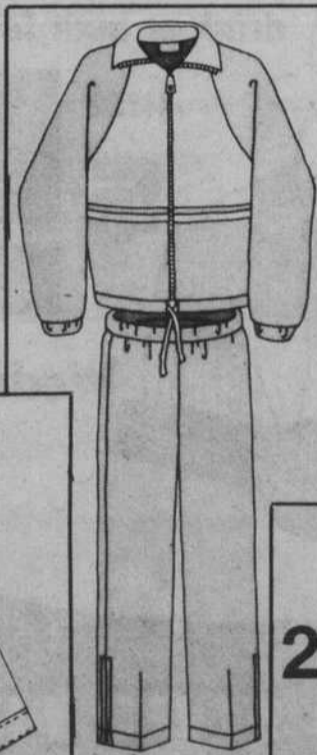
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