

# UNIVERSITY



Big Sister volunteer Tina Songer (center) spends time at Saturday Market's opening with "little sister" Amandine Kastler (left) and cousin Tephain Kastler.

## Measure 5 threatens program

### Big Brother-Big Sister may not survive effects

By Mollie Smith  
Emerald Contributor

Ballot Measure 5 cutbacks may eliminate yet another resource for children in the Eugene-Springfield area.

Big Brother-Big Sister of Mid-Oregon Inc. may not survive unless its staff members find some new revenue sources, said Merrie Garoutte, executive director.

Although the organization won't be directly affected by Measure 5, repercussions from cuts made in public programs and agencies could mean the end of Big Brothers and Big Sisters in Eugene. Cuts at the University and in other agencies statewide will make survival even harder for the already struggling program.

Garoutte said she is appalled by the recent cuts of the human development and education programs at the University. She said practicum students and interns from the program provide BB-BS with valuable services.

Besides giving time and knowledge, Garoutte said, students also have access to their professors' expertise and current research — two more resources the program will lose because the departments have been cut.

"The bulk of our volunteers are (University) students," she said.

Chris Denzer, who coordinates the BB-BS program at the University, said the campus program has about 30 volunteers. Denzer said the volunteers are "usually people involved with human development."

The University's Big Brother-Big Sister program is funded by the ASUO. Denzer said the program "fared pretty well" at a recent budget hearing.

"They cut our advertising a bit, but we're still in good shape," he said.

Although Denzer said he has yet to see any di-

rect effects of Measure 5 on the University program, he said he may lose some volunteers because of the cuts in campus human services programs.

"A lot of programs like ours will probably be hurt because of Measure 5," Denzer said.

Measure 5 will also mean the end of the state Vista Volunteer program, which provides tuition assistance in exchange for volunteer time. Garoutte said the program currently employs several Vista Volunteers and will likely lose them.

Garoutte pointed out, however, that Measure 5 isn't the only source of financial woes for BB-BS. The combination of financial problems inherent in many non-profit agencies and Measure 5 has contributed to the desperate state of the program in Lane County.

In the last five years, the program has lost 50 percent of its funding. Part of this loss is because agencies that formerly contributed to the program have been forced to run their programs with less money.

"There are all of these little bureaucracies, and we just got tightened out," Garoutte said.

Last year, United Way was forced to cut its funding for BB-BS. But Garoutte said her staff is still working with the United Way to examine the possibility of adding a case management position to the program funded by the United Way.

Even fundraising events that provided a substantial amount of the program's income in the past have failed in recent years. Garoutte said a recent holiday fundraiser that was once a substantial source of income for the program brought only \$250 last December.

Big Brother-Big Sister of Mid-Oregon Inc. is an affiliate of Big Brother-Big Sister of America. Its goal is to provide children aged 6 to 14 years with a positive adult role model who will offer the child non-judgmental companionship and guidance. Supporters of the program hope the one-on-one relationship will enable the child to develop trust, self-confidence and social and academic skills.

Turn to CHILDREN, Page 12

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