

# YWCA comes alive on campus

Thanks to last year's funding increase, the group is planning new programs and activities

By Michael Hines  
Student Activities Reporter

The University YWCA is reaching out to University students and the community after several years of little activity.

The association received a 46.1 percent funding increase from the Student Senate last year, and that's part of the reason for the new activity, director Carissa Betancourt said.

"They gave us money," she said. "Now they want to see results, and I think we will [oblige]."

The YWCA has outlined three major programs it wants to work on, which are being headed by recruitment coordinator Leo Alfonso.

Two of the programs involve mentorship in elementary schools.

One, called Start Making a Reader Today, is a state program, and the YWCA is recruiting volunteers to read to elementary children at schools around Lane County.

The other, called the Lunch Buddy program, involves Willag-

illespie Elementary School near Valley River Center. University students who become involved are expected to visit a student every week through May.

"I think it's important that we focus on children's education, especially at a time when funding is being cut," networking coordinator Belinda Vivier said. "That's pretty important that we see these student mentors coming in and taking the time out of their lives and dedicating that time to personal instruction to children."

Vivier attended a youth summit conference a month ago at the Lane County Fairgrounds, where she learned that students who have had mentors in the community become high achievers.

"A lot of children need good models in their lives," she said. "Children could be experiencing crisis. They might not have the proper role models. They might have parents that don't know how to parent. Having a good mentor can really impact their life."

Promoting literacy is one of the association's goals. The YWCA — which has been a University fixture for almost 100 years — promotes the empowerment of young

women and the elimination of racism and discrimination, Alfonso said.

However, she said, the association is not only for women, and men are encouraged to volunteer in any of the programs.

The third program that the YWCA is working on is the Safe Buddy program. The program is a revised version of a proposal Andrew Oberriter presented to University Housing last year.

In conjunction with the University Office of Public Safety, the YWCA wants to offer the Safe Buddy program, a walking escort service. Students could call the service, and two volunteers would walk them to their destination within 10 blocks of campus. The program will require about 100 volunteers, Alfonso said.

The Student Senate granted the YWCA funding to buy a new printer in Wednesday's session, and members said that is another step forward in what they believe will be a successful year.

The YWCA is once more an active campus group, Alfonso said.

"We're here. We've got new people working," she said. "We're alive again."

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University ticket offices sold out of student tickets Tuesday,

assistant ticket manager Colleen Standiford said.

Unused student tickets become available for friends and families the Tuesday before every home game, Standiford explained. After that time students can pick up tickets for

themselves or buy tickets for friends and family.

This time, though, friends and families bought up the last of the 6,000 student tickets, said Rachel Astrella, in the EMU Ticket Office.



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