

# Volunteers combine efforts for disabled kids

TAMOLIVER

Staff Writer

A four-year-old boy in a wheelchair has brought a diverse group of people together here on campus.

Steven Roberts, a little boy who aspires to be a PGA champion, spends a lot of time in a wheelchair that outweighs him by more than ten pounds. He was born with osteogenesis imperfecta, also known as "Brittle Bone". When Steven plays, he uses a wheelchair to prevent breaking bones.

The chair he uses is heavy to propel and awkward to maneuver. There are lighter chairs for children, some that weigh 26 pounds instead of 47, but they cost more, and the insurance companies won't pay for the ultra-lights. Most chairs for children two to four years old are just like Steven's. The average weight of the child who uses them is 26 pounds. It's one-size-fits-all, as the insurance companies will buy replacement chairs only every five years.

That's why, when Teryl Hoffmann-Figgins, a Clackamas psychology student, received a call from Sherman Washman about wheelchairs and how they might possibly be improved to make life easier for students navigating the campus at Clackamas, she thought of the children in wheelchairs for whom she volunteers—Hoffmann-Figgins is the founder and facilitator of a group called WOW, that's Winners on Wheels. Hoffmann-Figgins was well aware of the problems students have with their chairs.

"There's a lot for adults, but nothing for kids," she told him.

Washman, who occasionally takes classes at Clackamas, had



Teryl Hoffmann-Figgins, Steven Roberst and Sandy Roberst discuss the plans for wheelchair improvements.

TONI MCMICHAEL / Clackamas Print

become aware of some of the problems connected to wheelchair mobility on campus when he read the article by Shelbi Wescott in the March 8 edition of *The Print*. After talking to Hoffmann-Figgins, his focus shifted to the problems experienced by younger chair users.

A group from Clackamas' engineering, English and computer assisted design and manufacturing departments, along with

OATC, Hoffmann-Figgins and community volunteers, will explore the possibility of designing a new chair for Steven. They visualize a wheelchair that weighs 20 pounds, adjusts for growth and is affordable. They see a chair that will make life easier for many children.

"What we have to do is give these kids independent mobility," Hoffmann-Figgins explained.

Hoffmann-Figgins' dream is to

work with these young kids and help them to become involved in life and educational opportunities, to get them ready for the trials they will experience as teenagers.

"It's difficult enough to be a teenager. I want to be able to help," she said.

Her desire to help appears to be contagious. The Associated Student Government (ASG) will host a meeting of the WOW

group this Saturday, May 13 at 1 p.m. in Randall Gym. According to ASG member Mike Lewis, they already have reserved the gym for the Cougar Classic basketball tournament. In between games, they will set up games consisting of races, pickle ball, and an obstacle course to get to know the kids. And yes, ASG members do plan to borrow wheelchairs and see how they do in the events.

## LCOP helps homemaker find new start

TAMOLIVER

Staff Writer

Laurie Sullivan's lawyer suggested the Life and Career Options course at Clackamas Community College.

"She said it would be a good place to begin working on your life," Sullivan remembers.

After 27 years of marriage, Sullivan's husband had recently asked her for a divorce. Up to that point in her adult life, she had spent her time raising three children and being a willing homemaker.

"I chose to stay home and raise my children. I loved being a mother," she said.

At the time of her husband's surprise announcement, one child, Zachary, age 17, remained at home. Two others had grown up and left the nest and a grandchild had been born. Winter quarter 1998, Sullivan enrolled in the LCOP program.

"I was looking for hope in my life, that I had some kind of future," she recalled.

At LCOP, she met other people who were struggling through difficult phases of their lives. She found she wasn't alone or unique. She found that life presents changes to all of us.

"It seemed like every time I came here someone would share," she related.

In addition to receiving emotional support, Sullivan was encouraged to assess the marketable skills she already possessed and to discover what she really wanted to do. She was encouraged to pursue educational goals, and to apply for scholarships. Speakers came to the classroom and told of their own experiences. They had also had rough experiences, yet all seemed to come out on top.

"I actually felt like I had a chance to have a new life," she said.

This turned out to be true. To date, Sullivan has been awarded two \$500 scholarships and received a \$50 award for a speech she gave about Denmark in a recent tournament.

The Herb and Betty Morris Scholarship was the first scholarship Sullivan received, and it was presented in person by the retired couple/donors. Sullivan's parents attended the ceremony. After high school, Sullivan had married and begun raising children. Now there were people who believed in her ability to obtain an education.

"That someone felt I was valuable enough to give me money to go to school," she marvels.



MIKE POLLOCK / Clackamas Print

**Mother of three, homemaker Laurie Sullivan discovered life is about change and found a new beginning through the Life and Career Options program on campus.**

Since that emotional experience, Sullivan has received an additional scholarship from the Danish Sisterhood of America. In addition to doing work-study for LCOP and occasional housecleaning jobs, she continues to work on her educational goal, which has switched from nursing to business administration.

"As long as you are learning, you feel like you are moving forward," she said. "From LCOP, I really felt like I had a beginning. It wasn't an end to my life. A chapter was (merely) closed."

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