

For Good News Club

Students take weekly jaunt to church

by Donna Behrend

Every Monday afternoon, over 100 Warm Springs Grade School children trek to the Presbyterian Church for the "Good News Club" sponsored by the Child Evangelism Fellowship program.

Several volunteer teachers travel weekly to all Central Oregon grade schools to teach the "good news" to nearly 1,600 children in the area, who enthusiastically attend the sessions with parental permission. The kids learn Bible verses, how to pray, not to fear death and to care for children in other places by giving an offering. The offerings of Warm Springs children go to a missionary in Finland.

Co-directors Don and Thelma Renfro of Tumalo have been working with the Good News Club for about ten years. Mr. Renfro decided at that time it was "more important that children learn the gospel" than for him to continue his career as a transportation dispatcher for Lockheed.

During its eight years, in Warm Springs, the Renfros have seen the program grow from just a few to its present size. "It started as an after school program, but not many children could attend because of buses." While about one-third of the Warm Springs students attend,

Mr. Renfro gets 100 per cent participation when he travels out to Simnasho.

The program is not state or federally funded but completely dependent on donations for subsistence. The directors put about 4,000 miles on their van and car each month traveling to different schools, working "time and a half" according to Mrs. Renfro.

Everything is taught through visuals, making it easier for children to retain things learned. The program is interdenominational and every child is welcome. The Renfros feel that few children are attending Sunday School now and that the Good News Club is filling the absence of badly needed Christian education. Warm Springs principal Mike Darcy said that state law requires religious release time be made available to all children attending grade school in Oregon. The Good News Club is the only group responding to this mandate in Warm Springs.

Usually six staff members come to Warm Springs making the teacher-child ratio 1:16, sometimes causing discipline problems and unruliness. Problems are handled individually, by taking the child to another room and talking about why they are misbehaving. Children are separated into groups according to their sex or age.



GOOD NEWS - Warm Springs Grade School children make their way each week to the Presbyterian Church for the "Good News Club" sponsored by the Child Evangelism Fellowship program. Co-director Thelma Renfro often uses "Mortimer", a hand puppet to help children learn songs and Bible verses. Spilyay Tymoo Photo by DB

Some teachers at the grade school feel the time spent at Good News Club is beneficial but that children "miss out on important lessons" such as history and math.

Simnasho school head teacher Rich Little feels that the time away from class is filling a purpose and that the kids there are getting something out of it.

The Renfros welcome all parents who are unsure about what is going on or who are interested in helping at the Monday afternoon sessions.

Social workers focus effort on attendance, program improvement

by Roger Stwyer

Poor communication and coordination among the schools, police, courts, and social services has prompted the Johnson O'Malley Parent Committee to hire two social workers to help programs be more effective.

The social workers, who started work November 13, are Papo Cruz, who works primarily with Junior High students, and Sammy Colwash, who works with Senior High students. Both social workers also work with elementary students.

According to Charles Calica, Tribal Education Director, there are over 90 people in the school district, Jefferson County, and the Tribal organization involved in counseling. "What's happening," said Calica, "is all agencies are protecting their own turf, working with parts of problems and not getting a handle on the whole situation."

The social workers will also serve as extensions of the Tribal Education office and go out and locate the sources of trouble interrupting the flow of work. When the social workers encounter program hindrances, they bring it to that program's supervisor or to the Tribal Education Director's attention. "This gives school people and courts a more direct look at what's happening between support services," Calica said.

The two positions were part of the eleven budget items held in abeyance but were given the go-ahead following two special Council sessions January 23 and

24. Council's concern was whether their presence was a duplication of existing services, according to Calica. "The intent of the social workers was to overcome duplication," he said.

Along with community liaisons, the social workers will investigate attendance problems and work with problems identified in school, said Calica. Liaisons are viewed as school-based and social workers as community-based.

For the vice-principal, the social workers provide a link between school and courts. "They find out the total situation of a child and many times advocate where discipline actions are concerned," Calica said.

The normal routine of the social worker, according to Papo Cruz, is to go to the schools every morning, pick up attendance sheets, then find out why absent students are not in school. Home visitations or phone calls to parents are made unless parents have already notified the school excusing their child.

According to Cruz, many students miss school because of difficulties with classes, teachers or students who seem prejudiced, low grades, or illness. After learning the reason, the social workers find a way around it by changing classes, talking with teachers, talking with parents, or referring them to the court system.

Although social workers are available to transport students to school, it is done on a limited basis. Their feeling is that oversleeping is a poor excuse for missing the bus because it should be the parents' responsibility to make sure a student doesn't miss the bus.

When a student is sick or gone from school, the social workers deliver homework to them and when the student completes it, they take it back to school for grading.

Papo also said one of the challenges involved with the job is getting an angry parent's door slammed in his face or having no cooperation because they feel he's an outsider, he said. "I just keep going back because that's the only way I can deal with what's happening there," said Papo.

Cruz, who spent two years with the Tribal Group Home before taking on the social worker position, has set a goal to help kids make it through school - make them realize that school isn't as easy as they think it is. "School is important even though some kids here think they have everything, but they don't," Cruz said.

The Puerto Rican born worker thinks the major problem is the school. "I think teachers don't yet understand the Indian student," Cruz said. He feels that some teachers don't take time or don't have the time to help Indian students. As a result, kids get frustrated and get turned off by school, continued Papo. Another reason for disinterest in school could be the way Indian kids were raised, Papo speculated.

Cruz pointed out his concern over the many students who would rather attend boarding schools. "We would rather not be sending them to boarding school. If we can keep them in public school, then we do." He also said that students at boarding schools would still have to deal with the system and many times the student is home within a week.

WHERE TO REACH SOCIAL WORKERS

Papo Cruz and Sammy Colwash's office is located in the Day Care Center building, upstairs. Their office phone number is 553-1161, extension 284, 262, 263, or 240.

New Name For Old Place

If you're feeling clever these days, don't waste your ingenuity. Put it to work and re-name the Alcohol-Drug treatment center.

People call the treatment center many different things, so to avoid confusion, Alcohol Di-

rector Steve Bekofsky felt a re-naming contest was in line.

Any names you can come up with can be submitted to the name selection committee at the treatment center. The winner will be honored at a dinner sponsored by the program.



CHAT - Funded by Johnson O'Malley, social workers Papo Cruz, right, and Sammy Colwash, not pictured, can be seen quite frequently around the community. Larry Wesley, ninth grade, left, has a talk with Cruz before going to school. Spilyay Tymoo photo by Roger Stwyer