

Kids helping kids

Minford High School students volunteer for Big Brothers/Big Sisters as elementary tutors

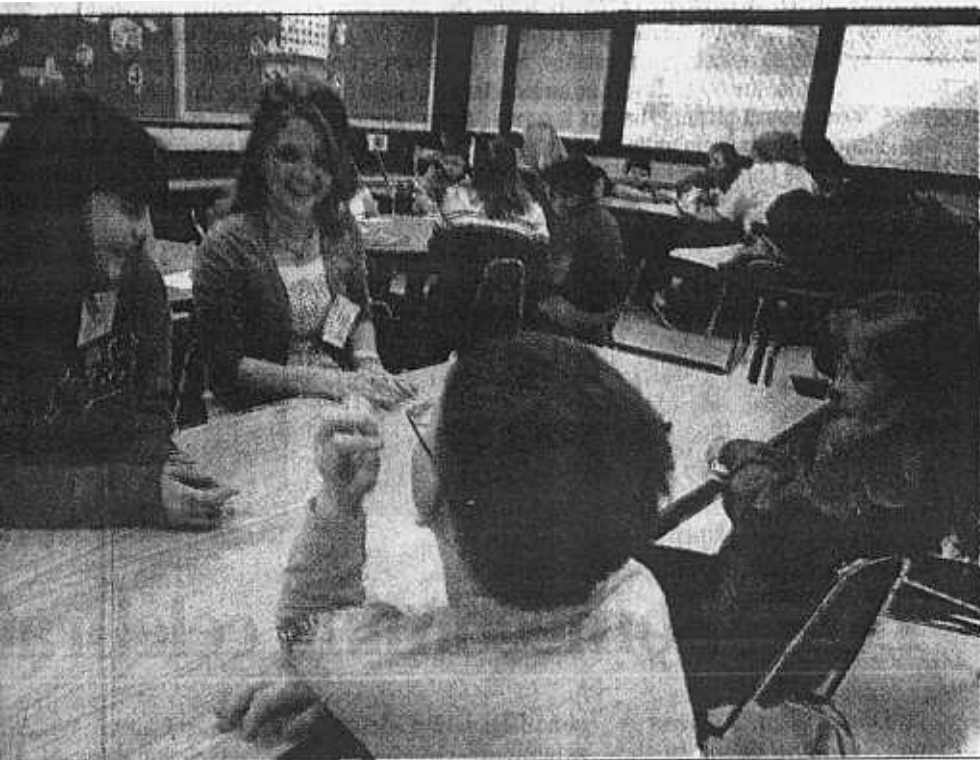
Building self-confidence, keeping children in school and away from drugs are only a part of what Big Brothers/Big Sisters is about.

The organization has several different programs, but this past year, the school program at Minford Elementary has overwhelmed Enrollment Match Support Specialist Christy Schreck.

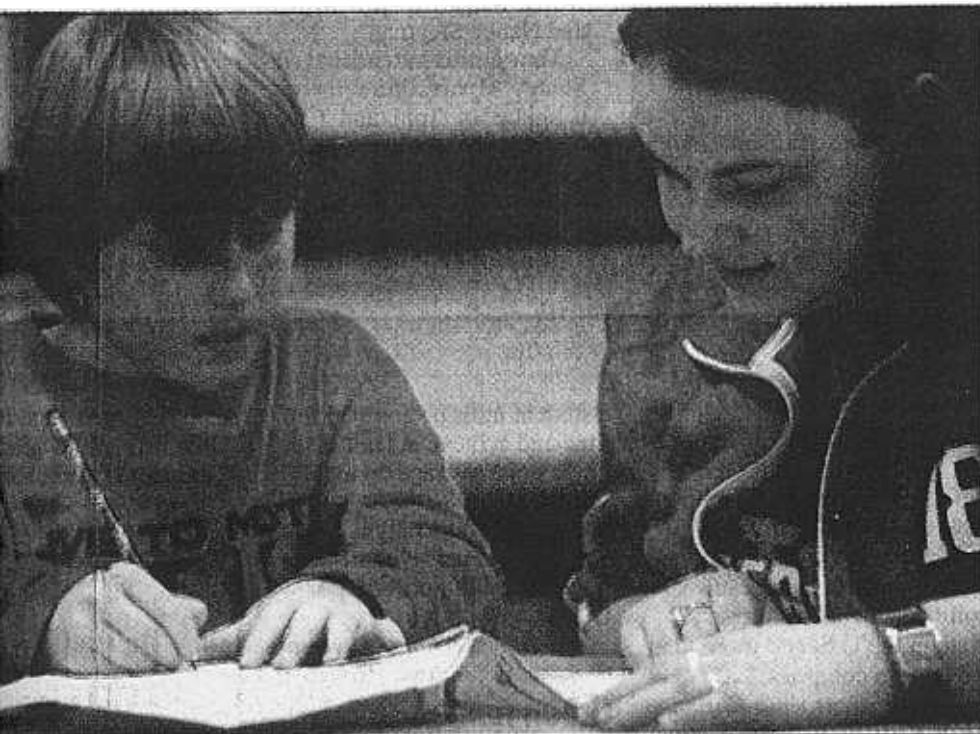
When the program was introduced to Minford schools in the fall, 122 children signed up for a Big Brother/Big Sister, and more than 85 high school students signed up to volunteer. Because tutors can be matched with up to three students, there were more than enough volunteers.

"I was more than ready," Schreck said.

is goes over a reading lesson with Minford third-grader Imelda Sanchez.



High School students Layna Porter, left and Sarah Johnson get to know second-graders Luke Rudiford, bottom and Brianna Stone during their initial meeting at the school on Jan. 18.



High School student Michelle Gilmore works with third-grader Jacob Carter.

by *Phyllis Noah*

Photos by Scott Osborne

was very excited." **Learn more and have more self-confidence."**

The program was actually stepped up because of the huge response. More stringent qualifications were put on the volunteers because there were so many, such as grade point average, attendance and overall character.

Christy Schreick

Big Brothers/Big Sisters enrollment match support specialist

"The school program could be a college student or a high school student and they just go to the school to work with individual students each week," Schreick said. "At the end of the week we leave it up to the teachers to refer the kids and if they may just need one-on-one attention, someone they can look up to as a friend.

Sometimes the child just needs extra help with one subject, she said.

Schreick works in an after-school mall program at Portsmouth West Elementary with about 21 match specialists three years.

"We also have a program at East High School with high school students that go to East Portsmouth Elementary to work with children," she said.

Schreick will normally do one big training for the volunteers after they are approved. During lunch she will give out information and talk about good communication skills and sexual abuse.

If a child does talk to the tutor about abuse, the volunteer needs to be prepared and she teaches them how to respond.

See **TUTORING**



Kacie McCreary chats with Jace Goodwin before getting started on his school work.

Tutors

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that situation.

"In our school-based program, we have a mixture of boys and girls who are tutoring," she said.

To keep track of the children's progress, normally the teachers will let Schreick know if they are doing better.

"The kids really start to come out of their shells and start respecting the teacher more and have more self-confidence," Schreick said.

At Minford she has students from kindergarten to seventh-graders. She never had kindergarten children before, and she said that presented a new "challenge."

"It's a really good program, and I'm really proud of Minford to get that many kids involved," Schreick said. "This is like a trial year."

The school has an extra

classroom that the Big Brothers/Big Sisters use once a week.

The high school students wear ID badges so every one knows who they are.

At the end of the year, there will be a big pizza party for everyone, and all the tutors and the children get certificates.

At Christmas, a lot of the high school volunteers brought the little ones presents, Schreick said. The children were excited.

The organization has several community programs for volunteers, including participating as a "Big" couple, a way for married couples to volunteer together.

Another program is for people who don't have time to make a weekly commitment, the "Big for a Day" program.

With about 170 children on a waiting list for the community volunteer program, the school program at Minford has no problems finding volunteers for the children.

Schreick matches volunteers with children. A volunteer commits for once a week with a child, for approximately three hours per month.

"I oversee and enroll volunteers and kids that come in from single-parent homes," she said. "I keep in contact with them and what they do and screen all the volunteers."

She gets referrals from Childrens Services, the schools, and sometimes individuals will just call in and ask for a Big Brother or Big Sister.

Community volunteers have to be 21 years old and have a background check with the sheriff's office, police department and Bureau of Motor Vehicles. Individuals have to have three referrals and a home visit.

"We have to meet their families and anyone who might be around the children," Schreick said.

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