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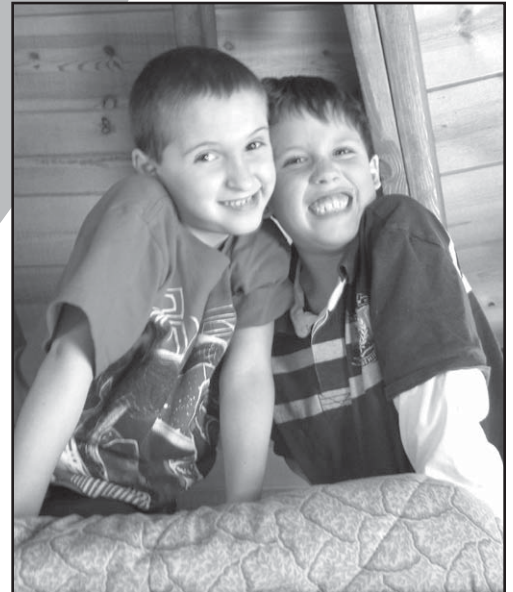
Making A Difference

*The following includes excerpts from an article written by Britta Arndt that appeared in the November 19, 2008 **Grand Rapids Herald-Review**.*

Kurt and Lavonne Thompson moved to Itasca County a couple of years ago from the Cambridge area to live permanently at their family cabin. Both were actively involved with youth prior to moving to our community and both had a strong commitment to mentoring. Initially, they considered mentoring one child, then they quickly determined — during the mentor application — process that they would really like two children. This was a little over a year ago.

Timing is everything! That fall, Kathy Hanson came to Bridges seeking mentors for her grandchildren who live with her and her husband. The brothers, Caleb and Landon, were practically inseparable and wanted to stay together in a mentoring match. Hence, the Thompson's and the boys were paired up. After a year together, it's pretty clear that strong bonds have been formed.

"It's been positive for both of us as well as the boys," says mentor Lavonne. "I think it helps



their grandmother, the kids and us; it's really a win-win situation for all." With four grown children of their own, the Thompsons say they enjoy the time they spend with the young boys. They make a point to do things together that teach the brothers life skills — no video games or television. And they make a point to have FUN together. Because they wanted the boys to join in some of the summer experiences on the lake at their cabin, Lavonne said they gave them swimming lessons. As this first year has progressed, the Thompsons agree that they've noticed the boys have opened up and become more confident.

...Difference cont. on pg 2



It's Chili Bowl Time!

Turn to page 2 for more information!

Nancy's Notes



Back in October, we set a goal to reach 100 matches by the time our Chili Bowl event is held on

February 7. It's a lofty goal — it means matching over 30 kids in about a three month time period. On average, we match only 2 kids a month . . . and some months we don't have any mentors to match with the waiting kids. Our time to reach this goal isn't over yet, but we still have quite a ways to go.

As I reflect on the possibility of not reaching our goal of 100 Matches by February 7, I'm heartened by the fact that we have more mentor applications in process now than ever. And we have more kids applying for mentors (a good thing, really . . . it shows that parents and service providers believe in the power of mentoring). Of course, that only increases our need for more adults to become mentor volunteers.

Even IF we don't reach our goal by the Chili Bowl, it's still our goal to reach 100 matches. And once we reach that goal, we'll set another lofty goal — because there are many kids in our community who need a mentor. Through mentoring, those kids' lives will not only be enriched now with new experiences and friendship, but their futures will also be more promising.

If you've been thinking about becoming a mentor, NOW would be a great time to do so!



Vicki Andrews retired from the board after serving three years. Thank you, Vicki!!

Joining the board are **Grace Derfler** and **Julie Gothard**. Welcome!!

Chili Bowl - Saturday, February 7, 11a-2p St. Andrew's Lutheran Church, Grand Rapids

The 8th Annual Chili Bowl is coming soon!!

This event is tradition in the community and a major fundraiser for Bridges. The Rotary Clubs of Grand Rapids partner with us for this event and they cook up a variety of chili, from mild to spicy and everything in between. Steve Wilson from the evening Rotary will prepare his chicken chili, and Joan from Brewed Awakenings will once again donate a batch of her famous vegetarian chili.

Tickets for the Chili Bowl lunch are only \$5 and includes chili of your choice, bread and bagel chips, beverage and dessert. Kids ages 5 and under are free.

In addition to lunch, there will be chances to win cash prizes, raffle drawings, a silent auction and a bake sale (highlighting specialty desserts). We're in process of collecting the silent auction items now, but we know wood carver Collin Clough, will donate a pair of Cardinals. Collin has donated a carving for the past three years! His work is breathtaking! **Thank you, Collin!**

Raffle tickets are \$5 each prior to the Chili Bowl as well as at the event. Prizes include a two night spring/fall package at **Loon Point Resort**, deluxe suite at **Timberlake Lodge**, a night at **Morning Glory Bed and Breakfast**,

Pancake Breakfast / Wreath Sale Results

A little over \$1,000 was raised as a result of our annual Christmas Wreath Sale and Pancake Breakfast. This year the event was held at Zion Lutheran Church and the Kiwanis Clubs supplied, prepared, and served the breakfast. **Thanks to the Kiwanis and all the people who came for breakfast!**

This December, the event is scheduled for December 5 at Applebees.



Save the Date

We are in the midst of planning a new, exciting dinner fundraiser to be held at Timberlake Lodge. Save the evening of Friday, May 1 — don't miss this!

H&R Block tax return preparation [up to \$200], two tickets to the Afro-Cuban All Stars performance at **The Reif Center**, and a computer clean up from **Connecting Point** [up to \$75].

To purchase raffle tickets and/or chili bowl tickets, send in the form included with this newsletter or call our office. See you there!

Supplemental funds will be provided by Thirvent Financial for Lutherans.

Exquisite Goodies Needed

Our Chili Bowl Fundraiser on Saturday, February 7, will also include a bake sale. We need a variety of scrumptious, exquisite baked goods — specialty desserts, pies and cakes, plates of cookies or bars, breads, etc. **Can you help?** We hope to make this an **EXTRAVAGANZA BAKE SALE** like no other so that when folks leave the Chili Bowl they can't possibly pass up taking home a special treat! Call our office for more information or to let us know what you can donate! And then be sure to attend the Chili Bowl

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Making A Difference

The boys' grandmother, Kathy, says "The boys really like it a lot; without the mentors, they wouldn't have opportunities to do many of the things they've done." The Thompsons take the boys for a few hours about once a week and this provides welcome respite from parenting. Kathy raised four children on her own as a single mother. Now, she and her husband are disabled and limited as far as what activities they can do with the boys. "They have a lot of energy," said Kathy. But, with the Thompsons, they're able to wear off some of that energy and they come back pretty tired."

Everyone has "gifts" to share. Friendship and guidance is something everyone can give. Whether you have access to a lot or a little, you can be a friend to a child, providing new experiences and encouragement. Ordinary people can make extraordinary mentors.



Waiting kids

Our Waiting List is growing, and we need more mentors! Here's a few of the kids who are waiting for a special adult friend. Is one of them waiting for you?

Tammi – age 10: Loves to go window shopping and paint fingernails.

Andrew – age 7: Wants to fish and 4-wheel.

Nicholas – age 9: Needs someone to spend time with.

Julia – age 13: Loves the outdoors and softball.

Barbara – age 14: Would love to bake cookies and play games.

Steven – age 6: Loves outdoor activities and one-on-one time.

Kathy - age 8: Likes arts and crafts and playing on the computer.

Jacob - age 9: Loves sports, mechanical stuff and being outside.

Timmy - age 6: Likes movies, going places and going to church.

Terri - age 5: Loves singing, acting, and going to plays.

Sammy - age 8: loves to play ball, hockey, and fish.

Paul - age 7: Loves golf, baseball, swimming, fishing, riding bike, art.

Derrick - age 8 [Keewatin]: Loves sports, playing board games, being outside.

Food 'n Fun Night

Thursday, February 19, 5:30 – 7:30p, at Zion Lutheran Church in Grand Rapids.

Dinner served at 6p.

THE MAD SCIENTIST

has a whole new batch of experiments for you to try. Don't miss this one!! Mark your calendars!!

New Matches

(since our last newsletter)

Doug Veit and Daniel
Skip Brunetta and Kevin
Angela Jenkins and Alexis
Bob & Patty Holycross and Aaron
Bob & Mary Litchke and Corrina
Liz Pettey and Alicia
Deb Metzger and Maria
Jan Oddo and Megan
Jayne Bumgartner and Ava
David Litchke and Anthony
Scot & Lori Kangas-Olson and Cassie

Seeking "a Guy"

We have a first grade boy at Murphy Elementary who is waiting for a school-based mentor. He has specifically requested "a guy" — any age is okay! Several students in his class are paired with school-based mentors. He's the last one to be matched.

School-based mentoring's mentor/mentee matches meet at school during the school day, generally once a week for about 45 minutes. This first grader's teacher would like the mentor and mentee to meet from 12:15 – 1pm, any day except Friday.

Friendship building activities can include playing games, talking, reading, sharing ideas as well as academic enrichment activities. The Bridges staff provide mentors with an array of activity ideas, and mentors can use their own ideas as well. If a student is struggling in certain academic areas, the teacher may provide activity ideas as well.

If you have 45 minutes a week you could devote to a child in a school setting, please contact Bridges at 326-4700.

 Congratulations to 14-year-old Alaura Hill! Alaura's story about her deer hunting experience will be published in *The Bunk Room*, a magazine written totally by kids for kids.

Way to go, Alaura!! You can read Alaura's article as well as the rest of the magazine on line at thebunkroom.com. Alaura has been matched with Barb Dorry for almost three years.

Donations

(received since our last newsletter)

Robert Acheson
Jim and Glenna Alstad
Vicki Andrews
Greg and Janice Aplin
David Broberg and Jacquelyn Tofte
Skip Brunetta
Leo and Corinne Burley
Bob and Mary Cahill
Robert and Donna Chopp
Bev Christopherson
Rodney and Shirley Cleveland
Community Presbyterian Church
Bob and Diane Davis
Dick and Joyce Doumeng
Skip and Bonnie Drake
Gerry and Mimi Eisele
Nick and Nancy Eltgroth
Vern and Carole Erickson
Rachel Evenson
Wade and Kathy Fauth
First National Bank of Coleraine
Tim and Patty Flood
Marc and Carrie Fowler
Thomas and Paula Frings
George and Kathy Goodwin
Grand Rapids State Bank
Carolyn Grieve
Michael Haig
Herb and Jean Halverson
Dennis and Vicki Hill
Bob and Patty Holycross
Cory Jackson and Anne Tofte
Andrea Johnson
Gerry and Nancy Johnson
Karen Karls
Kiwanis Noon Club
Lake Country Power
Ron and Deborah L'Amie
Ron Larson
Lawron Presbyterian Church
Birdie Lehn
Rodney and Patricia Leistikow
David and Susan Lick
John and Marty Licke
Bill and Patrice Mager
Dan and Cynthia Margo
Bill and Peggy Marshall
William and Betty Marshall
Jon and Noreen Maturi
Randy and Kathy McCarty
Jerry and Shirley Miner
Jack and Janice Muhar
Mark Mutchler
Dennis and Susan Neitzke
Dan and Barb Nelson
New Spirit Women's Clinic
Mike and Hollie Newton
Jim Owens
Carter Petterson
Jack and Teresa Pick
Don and Terri Pollard
Nancy Raymond
Dawn Renee
Tom and Nancy Saxhaug
Cliff Schroeder
Kitter Stanley
Ken Storrs and Jennifer Vail-Storrs
Staci Taylor
Ellen Teigland
Mary and William Troumbley
Father Jerry Weiss
Clair and Ginny Wilcox



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Upcoming Events

Every Friday – Itasca Curling Club Family Night, 5 – 7p, \$10/family

January 25: An Open House for the Birds @ Forest History Center, 1-4p. Birding program featuring staffed bird feeding stations, Q&A about attracting and feeding birds, best places for viewing.

January 31: Jenny Guyer Ice Fishing Tournament @ Trout Lake. Concessions, raffle, silent and live auction items @ Coleraine Fire Hall. 11a registration, \$5 entry fee.

February 7: Annual Bridges Kinship Mentoring / Rotary Clubs Chili Bowl, 11a – 2 p @ St. Andrew's Lutheran Church. Bake sale, silent auction, raffles, and great chili for lunch or take out.

February 13 – 16: Great Backyard Bird Count

February 14: 5th Annual Riders-in-Cahoote Sleigh & Cutter Rally, 12p @ Itasca County Fairgrounds. 11:30p registration & hook up.

February 19: Birds in Flight — The Art & Science of How Birds Fly, 6 – 8p @ Forest History Center. DNR Non-game Wildlife Biologist, Carol Henderson will present the program. Registration is required, \$5/family.

February 28: Women's Wellness & Lifestyle Expo @ 8:30a – 3:30p @ Itasca Community College. 2 keynote speakers, style show, breakout sessions, vendors. Free and open to the public.

March 7: *Pirates of Penzance*, 7:30p @ Reif Performing Arts Center. Tickets \$30, \$27, \$15.

March 7-8: Spring Dew/Winter Carnival, 10a– 4p @ Mt. Itasca

March 13: Reif Dence Company presents *Dancing with our Hometown Stars*, 7:30p @ Reif Performing Arts Center. Tickets \$12, \$11, \$8

March 14: 20th Annual Doll Lovers Club Doll, Bear & Toy Show & Sale, 10a – 3p @ Sawmill Inn. Tickets \$2.50 adults, 50¢ children.

March 14 – 15: ISOC Sno-Cross Snowmobile Races @ Quadna Mountain Park, Hill City

March 20 – 22: 42nd Annual Grand Rapids Area Jaycees Home, Sport & Travel Show @ IRA Civic Center.

Wish List



1] Specialty desserts for our bake sale at the Chili Bowl

2] Silent Auction items for the Chili Bowl AND our new

dinner/fundraiser to be held on May 1, 2009 (i.e.: gift certificates, experiences, services, time at your vacation property).

3] More mentors for all the kids on our wait list.