

Helping students succeed

HOSTS volunteers aid reading, mentor Bryan students

By Brooke Corso
The Battalion

The grade school years are a time when the guidance and support of a special adult, be it a kind teacher, a caring church elder or just a cool, older kid who showed them the ropes is important to a child's development.

Children need guidance to build a firm foundation of knowledge and self-confidence that will bring success as they go to high school and beyond. Help One Student To Succeed (HOSTS) is a nationwide mentoring program specifically designed to give children both academic and emotional support.

HOSTS provides one-on-one mentoring entirely from volunteers to help children improve their language skills. Bryan has nine elementary schools that participate in the nationwide program, one of which is Milam Elementary school.

Mary Palomares, HOSTS coordinator at Milam, said there is not a minimum age requirement for volunteering and high school and college students are eligible to be volunteers. Tutoring sessions are 30 minutes each

day, and can be held Monday through Thursday, depending on the volunteer's schedule.

At Milam, as with most other elementary schools, 55 to 60 children are involved in the program. Palomares said each child is given a folder with materials prepared for his or her reading mastery, skill level and age.

Since the meetings between mentor and student are one-on-one, the two can quickly establish camaraderie and a productive relationship.

At Texas A&M, several colleges are offering opportunities to become a HOSTS volunteer. Marcy Spence, HOSTS coordinator for Crockett Elementary in Bryan, said the colleges of business and education have classes either requiring community service or offering extra credit for volunteering.

In the nine years the program has existed in Bryan, many volunteers have remained, demonstrating the program impacts not only the students, but the volunteers as well.

Evan Epstein, a sophomore political science major, has volunteered with HOSTS for the past two years at Crockett. In his work with primarily second-graders, he focuses on helping them read better. He learned of the HOSTS program through HOSTS presentations to his Corps outfit and through fliers.

Epstein said the feeling of helping children and seeing them

progress is what has kept him involved with HOSTS.

Molly Peck, a junior journalism major said she found out about the program through her then-sorority, Alpha Chi Omega. As public relations chair for the Diamond Darlings, she signed up nine teammates to volunteer with HOSTS this semester.

"The children obviously grow in confidence as the semester goes on and participate more in the learning process as their skills improve."

- Molly Peck
HOSTS volunteer

Peck said she has worked as a HOSTS volunteer for four semesters and enjoys the challenges offered to her in helping a child who may be a little behind the others. Throughout each semester of meeting with a student, she has seen a marked improvement in all of them.

"The kids will eventually move from picture books to word books, and they will eventually master all the vocabulary in their word bank," Peck said. "The children obviously grow in confidence as the semester goes on and participate more in the learning process as their skills improve."

The volunteers may have more to gain through HOSTS than they originally thought, said Spence. Since HOSTS is a national program, employers from all over the country are aware of the impact such a program has, and they take notice on a potential applicant's resume.

HOSTS has had an immense impact on Bryan's youngest students.

Testing is conducted yearly throughout the HOSTS program, and Palomares said almost every child shows at least a one or two year gain in his or her reading level.

This progress has led to improvements in the Milam Elementary program, Palomares said. The 2000-01 school year saw the addition of a smaller HOSTS program to improve students' reading levels in Spanish.

Through the dedication of teachers and volunteers, HOSTS supports student's needs, so that each child receives the support and confidence essential for success.

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Case Copeland, a HOSTS volunteer and senior education major, reads with Billy Tennell, a second grade student at Navarro Elementary School.

DiCaprio reveals real middle name

ROME (AP) — What is in a name?

If you are Leonardo DiCaprio, it is the key to the German heritage of Italy's wandered-off native son.

DiCaprio, picking up one of Italy's Rudolph Valentino film awards Saturday, revealed the hidden W of his middle name. Given his distinctly Italian

name, the 26-year-old film star told audience members, they and everyone else know of his Italian heritage through his father's side.

But "what you probably don't know is my middle name: Wilhelm," DiCaprio said.

That came from his mother's side, he said, speaking of summers spent with his grandparents in Germany as a child.

DiCaprio said he shared "the overwhelming pride that we Italians take in who we are," but emphasized he was proud of the "Wilhelm" in him as well.

So much so, he said, that he resisted agents' recommendation for a more American name at the

People in the News

outset of his career: *Titanic* star "Lenny Williams?"

DiCaprio has been in Rome since fall filming Martin Scorsese's *Gangs of New York*.

Comic strip artist takes on Ventura

ST. PAUL (AP) — Both of Gov. Jesse Ventura's jobs get a playful poke in the opening installment of "VenturaLand."

The comic strip debuted in the *Saint Paul Pioneer Press* on Sunday. It depicts Ventura broadcasting a football game for his new employer, the XFL. He turns to his partner and remarks, "that tackle reminds me of a hold I

threw on the Hulk in '85."

The reply, to a visibly anguished Ventura: "Governor, are you any better at your day job?"

The one-two punch is meant to convey how people doubt Ventura's ability every time the wrestler takes on a new role, said Kevin Lenagh, the free-lance artist who will draw "VenturaLand" once a week.

Lenagh, 47, who said he voted for Ventura and approves of the job the governor is doing, expects a backlash.

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