

# Reception honors area volunteers

By Janet Craft  
Goodland Daily News

The Volunteer Appreciation Reception at Our Lady of Perpetual Help Catholic Church family center Thursday night was an opportunity for Goodland to give something back to all the people who give of themselves to others.

It wasn't exactly an ideal evening to get out, but the atmosphere inside was a lot warmer. Volunteers were greeted by friendly people who had them sign in and gave them a name tag. Jane Boys played background music on the piano while people were arriving.

Curtis Duncan started off the evening with comments about volunteers and named many different ways that people can volunteer, from delivering meals to elderly, picking up trash on the highways, setting up rides at the fairgrounds for the home-owned carnival, working at the museum, helping with Boy Scouts, to visiting the elderly at the Good Samaritan Center.

Curtis reminded us that volunteers are the lifeblood of a community. They receive no pay for what they do. Their only reward is a thank-you. But also there is a self-satisfaction in knowing that they did something to help someone else. Volunteers are priceless to those they assist.

Then refreshments were served. There was cake and punch, along with some time to visit before the program moved on.

Natalie McCarty, head of the Com-



ABOVE - Some of the volunteers who came to the Volunteer Appreciation Reception are shown getting refreshments. The centerpiece cake was made and donated by Anthony's, which said, "Volunteers Brighten Lives," and the other cakes were made by the Veterans of Foreign Wars Ladies Auxiliary. BELOW LEFT- It was time for hugs as those in attendance at the Volunteer Appreciation Reception were asked to follow along with the actions of the song, "Shake A Friend's Hand." Jane Boys was very entertaining and the involvement was cause for laughter and smiles.

Photos by Tom Betz/Goodland Daily News

munity Volunteer Appreciation Committee, gave some facts about volunteers. She said there were 2,016 volunteers here in 1998 and the number of hours volunteered was estimated at 74,000. She went on to thank the businesses that donated items for the evening, including the City of Goodland for the money to put on the celebration; Anthony's for the cake used as a centerpiece; Shananagan's for the balloons, the Veterans of Foreign Wars Auxilliary for making the cakes; the Altar Society of the church for the paper products; Jubilee for the punch products; the church for allowing everyone to use their facility; the Northwest Kansas Technical School students for helping to setup tables; and the media for publicizing the event.

Lively entertainment was provided by Boys. She sang songs and got the crowd involved. People were asked to follow along with the actions of the song, "Shake A Friend's Hand," and later sang along with Jane to "Love Can Build a Bridge." Jane also mixed in some comments about ways we can touch other's lives.

There were door prizes given away. One container of flowers went to Linda Koons and the other went to Dick Straubinger.

The evening was ended with a story told by John Golden about how vol-

unteerism created civilization.

As the people left, they were given balloons that said "Volunteers Brighten Lives" to release outside. There were 102 volunteers who came out for the evening.

# Girl's best friend dated one of killers

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just dropped."

As she heard others talking about the shootings anger and tears rose, Hannah said. She said her strong connection to the students who were affected is something that she is slowly becoming aware of as time wears on.

"Just today it is really starting to hit me hard," Hannah said Thursday evening. "Not just because of him, but I knew a lot of people that went to that school."

Describing the young man as "depressed" and "weird," Hannah said they met while Harris dated her best friend Amanda for a couple months last year. She has not seen Harris in almost a year, after he and her friend broke-up, but he made an impression on Hannah that she hasn't forgotten.

She said Harris had a tendency to take things to extremes which was apparent if someone made him angry. He was also virulently against "jocks," or student athletes, and minorities.

Reports that the two killers were labeled outcasts and often picked on by peers may lend reason as to why they resorted to murder and suicide, but Hannah said, at least externally, Harris wasn't bothered by people who taunted him.

"He didn't seem to care too much," she said. "If people called him a queer, he would just give them a weird look

and walk off.

"He really just disregarded anyone who said anything to him."

Although she had heard the term "Trench Coat Mafia" many times, Hannah did not know what it really meant until Tuesday, when Harris and the other killer Dylan Klebold, 17, were reported by the media to be involved in the gang whose members sported black dusters and enjoyed Gothic literature and art.

She said there were about fifteen students out of 2,000 at Stanley Lake, the Jefferson County high school she used to attend, who wore black trench coats every day.

"It makes me really glad I moved here," said Hannah. "I could have been at that school."

She and her friends would sometimes drive to Columbine High during lunch hour — the time of day the shootings occurred — to visit with friends there.

Hannah said a combination of a death in the family and signs of her possibly being drawn away from school and towards drugs or other self destructive activities by the group she was hanging around, prompted her mother to send her to Oberlin to live with former Jefferson County neighbors Sam and Christine Eldridge, and their three children David, Emilie and Joy, who all attend Decatur Community High.

Mr. Eldridge said the two families became close while living near each other in Colorado, and Andrea was like a sister to his two daughters.

Disgusted with he called the dysfunctional Jefferson County school system and facilities, where Mr. Eldridge said he saw students smoking crack cocaine and marijuana on school grounds, he and his wife home schooled their children for two years.

The family moved to Oberlin in 1997 after Mr. Eldridge saw an advertisement in the *Rocky Mountain News* about a house for sale here.

He and his wife based their decision to move here on the quality of the school system, he said.

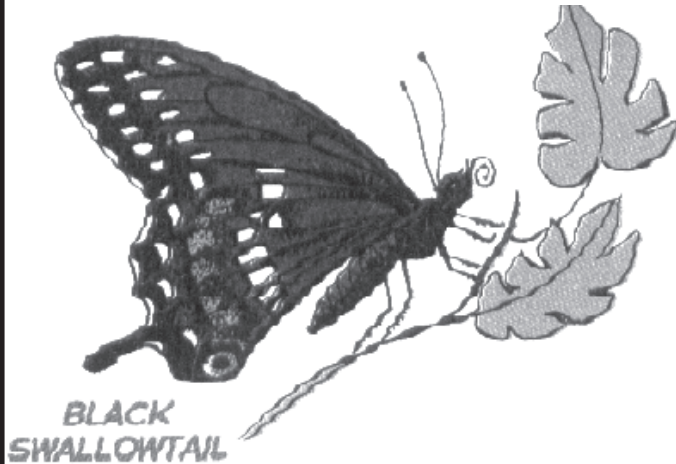
Mr. Eldridge said he attributes teenage acts of violence such as shootings and stabbings to the breakdown in the American family.

"Parents are so busy earning a living to pay high house payments, they don't have time to pay attention to their kids," he said.

After commuting back and forth for a while, Mr. Eldridge decided to leave his career as an investigator with the state of Colorado and Liberty Mutual Insurance and permanently moved to Oberlin so he could devote more time to his family.

"I never met one older man or woman who said 'I wish I had spent more time working and less time with my family,'" he said.

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