



Big Brothers Big Sisters takes a moment to thank supporters

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Diane Montz/Daily Globe

Betsy Wesselhoft, left, and Stephanie Robinson talk about their year as Big and Little Sisters on Tuesday afternoon at Hallowed Grounds in Ironwood. Big Brothers Big Sisters of the Western Upper Peninsula held an open house at the coffee house to thank sponsors of its annual Bowl for Kids fund-raiser.

By **DIANE MONTZ**

Globe Staff Writer

IRONWOOD -- Big Brothers Big Sisters held an open house Tuesday afternoon to thank the sponsors who make the "Little Moments ... Big Magic" possible -- and urge them to continue their support.

"Our programs would not exist without community support," Maggie Munch, program director for Big Brothers Big Sisters of the Western U.P., told the small gathering at Hallowed Grounds.

She said the Western U.P. branch, which serves six counties, lost \$32,000 in state funding this program year.

Munch said a source of funding from the state was no longer available for prevention programs.

About \$10,000 of the \$32,000 was earmarked for this area. That amounts to nearly 40 percent of the annual budget, according to Michele Anzalone, who directs the program in Gogebic County and Iron County, Wis.

Programs for this school year are not in jeopardy, but Munch said the agency is looking for new sources of funding.

Bowl for Kids, the annual February fund-raiser, took in \$13,800 this year, Anzalone said. The bowling scores are secondary to the competition between law enforcement officers and ambulance staff to raise the most money.

"It's a lot of fun," she said.

Multiple Mentoring Opportunities

Big Brothers Big Sisters has a three-pronged approach to mentoring here:

--A traditional one-on-one match. The pairs plan their own activities.

--Team mentoring. One-on-one matches participate in group activities organized by Anzalone. Weekly programs take place at Gogebic Community College, with college students and staff and City of Ironwood employees acting as mentors.

--Teen mentoring. High school seniors mentor elementary students in a weekly session that includes homework, self-esteem and games. This operates at schools in Ironwood, Bessemer and Wakefield.

Two "Bigs" involved with different mentoring programs here said the adults benefit too.

"I look forward to it," Ironwood city manager Scott Erickson said of the weekly team mentoring. "It's just as much fun for the mentors."

Erickson said the "littles" especially like the contact with the GCC athletes who are mentors.

Betsy Wesselhoft and Stephanie Robinson, 10, paired for about a year, talked about shared activities that include word games, beach outings and, recently, baking a peach pit.

Wesselhoft said she sometimes plans activities. Other times, she asks Robinson, "what do you want to do today?"

They share a journal, writing entries and passing the book back and forth.

It started, Wesselhoft said, "the first time I went to her house with Michele and met her Dad and Granddad."

--For more information about Big Brothers Big Sisters, contact Michele Anzalone at 932-8463 or mentors@goodwillfarm.com.