

Volunteer to help children at city schools' Preschool

Special to the Oak Ridger

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EDITOR'S NOTE: The following is the first in a series of submitted stories on the many volunteer opportunities available within the Oak Ridge schools.

The purpose of the Oak Ridge schools' Preschool program is to provide early intervention for children who are considered at risk for learning and to enable families to be active partners in the educational process of their children.

Based on the belief that all children are ready to learn from the time of their births, the preschool program strives to provide opportunities for children that will allow them to enter kindergarten with background knowledge and skills necessary for learning. The program meets the highest performance standards of each of the sponsoring/funding agencies and all students have access to family services, health and dental assistance, behavioral and mental health services.

In order to maximize support and educational opportunities for children and families, the school needs the help of the community.

"We have three volunteers who come weekly to work in various capacities ranging from delivering the Second Harvest Food for Kids packets to spending time helping in the classroom," said Marian Phillips, Preschool principal. "We value their commitment, and we are always in need of more volunteers to help us provide extra opportunities for our children. Any contribution -- whether it's an hour or a day or monetary -- is appreciated."

There are many ways that you can be a part of the Preschool program:

- **Reading is Fundamental:** The RIF programs are designed to encourage a love of books and reading. Three times between January and May, the children each receive a book they have personally selected to take home. The Preschool designs the RIF distribution days thematically and sets up rotating centers for the children to experience. The school always need adults to man a center as each class comes through.
- **Librarian:** The Preschool has a wonderful library, but no librarian. The school is in need of volunteers to commit to serving as a librarian a couple of times a week to keep books shelved and orderly.
- **Reading Buddies:** Volunteers are needed to read to individual children on a consistent schedule. The reading takes no more than 15 to 20 minutes and makes a huge impact.
- **Trike Repairs:** The Preschool has tricycle time for each class, but some of the trikes are in need of repair. If you are a handy person that would like to work on getting the "fleet" back to full capacity, please volunteer.
- **Building Grounds:** The Preschool needs assistance in cleaning and sprucing up old flower beds, and general clean up around the building and playground. Teachers use the grounds, flowerbeds, and the areas around the preschool for many science lessons. Observations of plant growth, animal life and habitats, and changes in the weather are a part of teachers' everyday lessons, but it takes time to maintain these areas for education. Help in this area would greatly enhance the curriculum in not only science, but all areas of development.
- **Donations:** Educational programming for preschool children has some rather unique requirements, including such items as detergent (washing mat covers and soiled clothing), lots of hand sanitizer, wipes, pull-ups, colored floor tape for bus lines, manila tags, and tooth brushes/toothpaste. There is always a need for new clothing articles used for kid emergencies -- tennis shoes (8-11), sweats (3T-4T), pull-ups and wipes. The Preschool is appreciative of any and all monetary donations, either to a classroom or to the school in general.

To become a volunteer, make a contribution or find out other ways you can help Oak Ridge schools' Preschool, contact Tribby Kelly at (865) 425-9122 or tkelly@orn.edu.