Elks Club Tennis Program

At Friendship House, we strive to provide our students with as many positive opportunities to broaden their academic, personal, social, spiritual, and athletic horizons. This spring, we partnered with the Elks Club of Billings to provide monthly tennis lessons for our students. The Elks Club was extremely generous to provide our children with quality instruction in their new, state-of-the-art tennis facility, free of charge to families. Our new budding tennis stars were also provided with new tennis sneakers and rackets so that they could continue their athletic careers after the tennis clinics were over. The Elks Club Tennis Program is just one example of the extensive network of community agencies that help us invest in the success of kids.

Director’s Report

It is amazing to me how God can take a small idea and make it into something more than we ever ask or imagine. This is happening at Friendship House. As I look at blueprints on my desk that spell out this miracle, I get excited. What started out as a “Total Kitchen Makeover” from the Downtown Billings Rotary Club has become a “New Commercial Kitchen and adding a Classroom to our Building.” Thanks to the Rotarians, the BNSF Foundation, the Bentley Foundation, the Magic City Optimists, and our generous donors we have raised $225,000 of the $275,000 we need to complete this major construction and renovation project debt free. That only leaves $50,000 to raise. Last year we served over 16,750 meals to kids out of an 8x10 kitchen and having this new 16x20 kitchen— with commercial appliances— and an 8x10 pantry— will allow us to feed even more kids healthy and delicious food. Knowing that we are so close to beginning our “Kitchen and Classroom” building project makes me jump up and down with excitement! Would you consider helping us reach our goal by giving toward this amazing project?

Thank you,
Sincerely,
Rev. Matt Lundgren, Executive Director
Gardener’s Market

It’s been a warm and wet summer, and the Friendship House Children’s Garden is thriving! The hard work that our students put in throughout the spring planning this year’s crops and planting seeds has really paid off. After learning about all of the science behind successfully growing healthy plants, our students are taking their knowledge to the next level by selling what they have grown at the Montana Gardener’s Market in South Park every Thursday from 4:30-6:00 PM. Each week, a group of approximately 6 students and adult chaperones attend this event to learn basic financial skills, the importance of supply and demand, and how to be successful salespeople. The money they raise will go toward reinvesting in their efforts for next year, giving to their choice of charity and funding a fun and exciting activity this fall. We are proud to be able to provide our students with such important and fun hands-on business experience. Come visit us next Thursday to purchase some delicious, healthy, locally grown lettuce, rhubarb, herbs, tomatoes, squash, and more!

Thresa Skeslien Jenkins, another of our great classroom volunteers and a recent high school graduate, had such a great time with the kids that she increased her volunteer commitment from three days a week to five over the course of the summer. Thresa was a valuable asset to the class as she assisted with lessons and activities. “Helping the students keep a positive attitude with their studies was really rewarding,” she says with a smile. “And it’s even better when they come back the next day with that same positive attitude.”

And the need for help doesn’t stop where the classroom ends. Friendship House enjoys the assistance of volunteers in Maintenance and Gardening to keep our building and grounds beautiful and our kids safe, too. Some of our volunteer helpers are regular weekly assistants, like Bev Rukstad, who keeps our classroom and clothing storage spaces clean and organized. “It’s an ongoing battle,” Bev admits, “But somebody’s got to do it!”

If you are interested in being one of those “somebodies” this fall, please contact our Volunteer Coordinator Kate Olp by giving her a call at 406-259-5569 or sending her an e-mail at kateo@friendshipmt.org.

Vacation Bible School

Since we have the kids with us all day during the summer, we are able to provide them with even more fun and enriching activities than during the school year. We partnered with three local churches to enroll our students in Vacation Bible School to ensure that their summers are filled with faith and fun. Monday through Friday, for three consecutive weeks, our kindergarten through fourth graders spent time with First English Lutheran Church and Emmanuel Baptist Church. Activities included songs, skits, crafts, and games to help the children learn more about the gospel and deepen their understanding of the importance of faith in Christ. We are extremely grateful for this opportunity to partner with other organizations in the spiritual community of Billings to continue our mission of “reflecting the love of Jesus Christ by fostering renewal, stability, and transformation in the lives of children and families in South Billings.”

This summer
76 volunteers donated a combined total of
652 hours of labor.

Friendship House Needs

Boys and Girls Shoes (size 1-12)
1 Mini Van
Foldable Ping-Pong Table
Nerf Balls
A portable Sound System for the Assembly Area
Car/Van Booster Seats
Snow Blower
Gas Weed-eater

Facebook Page
Find us on our Facebook page: Friendship House of Christian Service.