



Guymon DAILY HERALD

Coalition receives community support

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By Miranda Fleming

After realizing the need for a local youth shelter, efforts by the Texas County coalition began in 2008 to make it a reality and as a result, the Panhandle Services for Children was born and has been moving forward ever since.

Group member Christi Hale said community efforts since then has been impressive.

“A Youth Service Board was formed to support and organize efforts toward Panhandle Services for Children and has organized many fundraisers, including a chili cook-off fundraiser, three gold tournaments and the first annual murder mystery dinner theater,” Hale said. “All were very successful, the board has raised around \$65,000-\$70,000 via donations and fundraisers.”

Hale went on to report, the project has been able to re-furbish the shelter’s building, leased by the City of Guymon, with a \$40,000 grant the group received.

“The City is leasing the building to them at a very low cost and the furnishings for the shelter were all sold to them at dealer costs, as well,” Hale said. “Many, many citizens and businesses have donated/contributed, as have the Texas County Commissioners.”

According to Hale, Panhandle Services for Children now has a counselor with a caseload of 26 youth, who sees the children at school and at the shelter and has applications pending for a designation youth service agency and 501c3, non-profit status.

Board member, Joe Robinson said, “It’s taken a while, but there are a lot of balls in the air right now and will continue to be juggled, successfully I hope, until we can get this thing up an running.”

If the shelter becomes designated before July, it should be eligible to receive state funding in the next fiscal year. “We’re working hard at meeting self imposed deadlines, if successful, we hope to initiate some kind of shelter services, either host home or traditional facility, as well as expanded serviced, beginning in the late summer or early fall of 2012,” Robinson said. “We are also approaching our legislators soon to formally request their assistance in getting some earmarked funds for our shelter operations.”

Panhandle Services for Children is also proud of the partnership they are responsible for starting between NWOSU and OPSU to offer a Masters degree in Counseling locally, via ITV classes at OPSU.

“It has been difficult to recruit/retain master’s level staff in the Panhandle, so we are developing our own professional level staff. We have two graduates from the program now and six students in the program at this point,” Robinson said. “We have a part time staff person, Jerry Mihelic, who coordinates everything between the institutions, offers a contact point for potential students, acts as a course advisor, etc.”

The board is gearing up for the next fundraiser, the 2nd Annual Murder Mystery Dinner Theater, entitled, “Murdered by the Mob,” which will be held on Fri.—February 10, Sat.—Feb. 11 and again on Sat.—Feb. 18, all performances beginning at 6:30 p.m.

The event will be held at Southern Office Supply, in the old Hotel Dale Lobby. Admission is \$50 per person and does include entrance into the performance, a prime rib dinner and drinks, with all proceeds going to the shelter.

Advanced tickets can be purchased at Panhandle Printing, located at 119 N.W. 4th in Guymon or at the First National Bank of Hooker, located at 119 N. Broadway.

For questions or to donate or help, contact Judy Stedje at 580-338-7082.