

# Playhouse raffle helps area girls

By Marceen Liechti  
of the WSN

SOMERS — An ongoing concern for the parents and teachers of the West Shore has been the transition of the rural students leaving eighth grade in Somers and entering the ninth grade in Kalispell.

The Nurturing Center recognized the need for teenage girls to have a support system and developed the Gemini program, which links girls to adult mentors.

Local residents Tim and Jennifer Rogge have become involved with the family resource center — first, in guiding their journey as new parents, and then as participants in the coordination of Nurturing Center programs.

Jennifer with her five-day-old daughter realized that not many of her friends were in the same stage of parenthood. Seeking a support system led her to the Nurturing Center.

Her five years have drawn her into volunteerism on the Playhouse raffle committee and two years as Parent Share area coordinator. Parent Share is the community outreach providing meetings and information to several areas in the Valley.

As his wife became involved and the Gemini concept developed, Tim found that his skills as a carpenter could be put to use for the Nurturing Center by building a playhouse each year for the annual Dreambuilders Playhouse raffle.

"I have seen several kids getting lost after graduating from Somers," said Rogge. "It isn't right for these girls (to not have support) and it shouldn't happen."

According to Jennifer, Gemini is a mentoring program for ninth grade girls. It benefits girls from the rural communities that feed into the larger Kalispell school system.

Kalispell students are established at the school site for seventh and eighth grades, whereas students from rural schools such as Somers, West Valley, Kila, etc., join the system at ninth grade. Many can get lost in the crowd.

"I remember my eighth grade class and have seen that after graduating with 20 other students from Somers School, we all dispersed and you nearly never saw anyone because they either dropped

out or got lost in the different cliques," said Rogge.

The cedar-sided playhouse under construction was made possible by the ongoing donation of building materials from Tom Sliter of Sliter's Ace Hardware in Somers. To make this year's model more interesting, Sliter's has included hardware, such as Certaintone Vinyl windows, that is being showcased at the Majestic Arena's Home show.

All the playhouses are of high quality craftsmanship. After the kids grow out of the playhouse, the structures can serve as garden sheds or storage units. This year's playhouses will be a peeled log cabin, a gingerbread house, Rogge's cedar log home, and another theme yet to be determined by the Kalispell Center Mall.

Rogge's playhouse is sided with Skirl, a flat cedar siding that has a natural wavy contour, two vinyl picture windows, two sliding large windows, and an open roof structure.

Last year's model had a rainbow theme in which daughter, Sela, now five years old, helped the family paint the exterior.

"Sela has enjoyed helping to build and paint the playhouses," said Jennifer. "It is hard for her to see them go, but she understands why."

Other area residents involved with the Nurturing Center, and in particular, the Playhouse Raffle committee, are Bev Griffin, Kristi Fischer, and Debi Gilsoul. Bruce Jellison and Ray Rogge also helped in the construction of the playhouse.

Playhouse raffle tickets can be purchased at Sliter's Ace Hardware in Somers.

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