

# Local K-Life chapter recognized for its volunteers

BY CAITLIN DEAN  
Staff Reporter

Truman students' commitment to volunteer work has brought national recognition to the local K-Life program.

Kevin Wasemiller, K-Life's national director of operations, said the Kirksville area K-Life program has the highest number of volunteers of the 38 national chapters, as announced at a meeting at the K-Life headquarters in Branson, Mo., in January.

"It's not a stat that we take lightly," Wasemiller said. "It's something that we focus in on pretty heavily, trying to locate volunteers from local colleges."

K-Life, a non-denominational Christian ministry, interacts with children in kindergarten through 12th grade through Klub meetings, small groups and other activities and events, Kirksville K-Life area director Jon Courtney said. All K-Life fundraising takes place locally, and the organization relies on college-aged volunteers to lead Bible studies and spend time with the kids, Courtney said. K-Life works with more than 300 students and has 79 volunteers, including four student interns, he said. K-Life seeks

to follow the words of 1 Thessalonians 2:8, he said.

"For we love you so much that we are delighted to share not only the gospel of Christ with you but our lives as well," Courtney said. "That's kind of our motto. Living life alongside of them, showing the kids the way to live, a right lifestyle."

Courtney said K-Life helps kids deal with negative peer pressure and live their lives in ways that are pleasing to the Lord. Volunteers try to become involved in kids' lives by attending sporting events, eating lunch with them at school and hanging out with them.

"It's building a relationship with kids, show them that you love them, and then once they see that love, they go, 'What's this all about? I didn't know that I was this important, and you guys treat me like I'm a million bucks,'" Courtney said.

He said all of K-Life's volunteers currently come from Truman and that the connection between the organization and the school is unprecedented.

"I think it says a lot about the quality of people who come to Truman and their hearts in wanting to turn around and give back to people the same things that they



Mayank Dhunaga/Index  
The Kirksville K-Life chapter, which has more volunteers than any other chapter in the nation, gathers at the K-Life house Monday evening.

have received," Courtney said.

Allison Stone, a member of the women's staff, said she attended K-Life in Oklahoma City for two years in high school and then volunteered for the same K-Life program during college. She said she wanted to share the passion she saw from volunteers when she was in the program.

"When I was in high school, K-Life had a huge impact on who I was," she said. "It really helped me figure out my identity and what I really wanted to do with my life

and the way I wanted to impact people, kids specifically."

Stone said smaller towns like Kirksville sometimes have more participants in the program because it is easier to target specific schools and let kids know about K-Life.

Stone said current volunteers and interns have recruited many of their friends, which has contributed to the large number of volunteers in the program. She said having so many leaders enables K-Life to

reach more kids. Some K-Life programs use young professionals or parents if no local college is available, but college students are ideal, Stone said.

"College students are at an age that's old enough that they have a different maturity level, but to the kids they still seem young and they still seem cool, and they still seem like someone they want to hang out with," she said.

Senior Kevin Harrison, a K-Life intern, said Truman provides a unique opportunity to recruit K-Life volunteers.

"[Truman] is separate from other schools because of the strong Christian faith that exists on this campus in a lot of ministries, whether it's the Newman Center, CCF [or] the BSU," he said.

Harrison said K-Life volunteers give a lot but also gain because of the program.

"I feel like Allison and Jon, our directors, do a great job of pouring into [volunteers] and helping them grow in their faith too," he said. "So it's not just a place they're always pouring out, they're getting poured into as well. They're getting advice and guidance."

K-Life has a strong reputation in Kirksville, Harrison said.

"One of the coolest things for me is hearing parents say how thankful they are that there's a sophomore in college that's coming over and playing Nintendo or just hanging out with their kid and knowing that it's a positive influence," Harrison said. "I've heard numerous times parents say that they see K-Life helping this community in so many ways."

# Professor receives grant for Korean math project

BY RENÉE CELLA  
Staff Reporter

Janice Grow-Maienza is working to make sure American elementary school children measure up to children in other countries when it comes to mathematics.

Grow-Maienza, a professor of education, received a federal grant for \$176,000 from the No Child Left Behind Act. She will use the money in a teaching institute this August that will introduce local teachers to gecKo mathematics, her revolutionary math program taken from Korean curriculum.

Grow-Maienza said American children are scoring lower than other countries' students in the math sections of international tests. Korean children score in the first or second slots in these tests, and Grow-Maienza said she wanted to see what was being done differently there.

In 1995 and 1996 Grow-

Maienza studied first- and fifth-grade classrooms in Korea. After some translation, she discovered that Korean teachers give very detailed lessons that don't venture far from their national textbooks. Grow-Maienza said she brought home all of the textbooks that the Korean teachers were using for their first- and fifth-grade students.

"I was amazed at what we found in Korean elementary classrooms, [especially] the concise, coherent system by which constructs and operations were conceptualized for children," Grow-Maienza said. "[The Korean national textbooks show] clear conceptualizations of the [methods]. This is something that one does not see in American primary and elementary textbooks, not even in the new reform textbooks."

Grow-Maienza said she has been working on editing and translating the Korean textbooks since then. Now that she has fin-

ished, her program is somewhat different from what she found in the classrooms because it is something she created on her own. So she decided to rename the program gecKo mathematics after watching her children play with the lizards in Hawaii.

To help spread the knowledge that she gained in Korea and to help teachers to learn about gecKo mathematics, Grow-Maienza has set up a teacher institute to take place in August.

"Each teacher will be receiving an extensive gecKo mathematics pre-algebra module adapted from [the] English translation of Korean Sixth Curriculum," Grow-Maienza said. "This module includes a chapter for each of the second through sixth grades with basics that kids need to properly learn algebra, including multiplication, division, decimals and fractions."

Jane Glickman, a representative of the Department of Edu-

cation, said the purpose is to support and improve elementary and secondary education.

"It is built on four pillars: accountability for results and emphasis on doing what works based on scientific research, expanded parental options and expanded local control and flexibility," Glickman said.

The federal government allocates money to states' departments of education — elementary, secondary and higher — to improve the lower schools' curriculum, Grow-Maienza.

"It is a collaboration of higher education and elementary

schools," she said. "The money is designated to reach the secondary and elementary

teachers in the northeast region of Missouri, 12 districts in total, including La Plata and Kirksville. The programs created with the grant will be open to other school districts, but the main districts to be affected will be the ones in the northeast region."

The money that Grow-Maienza received through the grant will help with the promotion and continuation of her program and the teacher institute this summer.

"Each teacher that partici-

pates will get a \$1,000 stipend, and we are planning to have around 50 teachers, so that's \$50,000 [spent] right there," Grow-Maienza said. "Some of the money will also go to release faculty that is participating in the program to have more time to devote to the project. The rest goes to materials that will be used to show the curriculum that gecKo mathematics provides and also to the Web site [geckomath.truman.edu]."

Lisa Coy, La Plata Elementary School principal, said the school has shown early interest in the project and has already registered six teachers for the teacher institute.

"There was an interest on [the teachers'] part," Coy said. "And we are focusing on our math instruction next year, and we thought it would be a great opportunity [to improve our program]. The plan is to implement the program in the coming years."

"I was amazed at what we found in Korean elementary classrooms, [especially] the concise, coherent system by which constructs and operations were conceptualized for children"

Janice Grow-Maienza  
Professor of Education

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