Students help children develop skills

Kirkville after-school program depends on University volunteers

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Reading stories, playing games, helping children with their homework and bringing in guest speakers are just some of the things that University volunteers do each Friday afternoon at the Family Advocacy Center.

The center was formed in 2000 in the Department of Behavioral Sciences because of a need to provide one-on-one help to children who are at risk in the Kirksville community.

The program is open to children in grades kindergarten through fifth-grade and is designed to provide an additional supportive environment. There is no cost to the children or their families.

There are many duties for Truman students who volunteer at the center. "It's like being a big brother to the children," said Sunny Natsch, a senior at Truman.

Gaines said there is a direct link between how the children at the center are doing in school and how many people are volunteering at the time because early childhood needs are not as fortunate.

Although the center receives a large amount of volunteer help, Gaines said there are still times when they don't have enough volunteers to help children with their homework. The center is always looking for more volunteers.

"We do try to make it a very positive experience for the kids and the volunteers," Gaines said. "Most of the time it's a very positive experience for the kids and the volunteers."