

## For the Love of Children

The Salem area chapters of Delta Kappa Gamma and Center 50+ (one of Salem's Senior Centers) co-sponsored an event called ***"For the Love of Children."*** This event was held right after Valentine's Day instead of our usual Founder's Day Celebration. We enlisted Center 50+ to co-sponsor it with us so we had a free place large enough to meet and we could invite community members to participate. It let the community know more about Delta Kappa Gamma and provided insight for all attendees into what free programs are available to students in the Salem-Keizer area. Alpha Epsilon Chapter planned the evening and Delta, Nu, and Alpha Delta provided the refreshments.

The program started with part of the choir from a local high school singing "The Greatest Love of All." Then a panel of three caring adults shared information about some free programs offered in Salem-Keizer for children. These programs are available for preschool through high school. The fourth panel member shared how seniors might qualify to become a Foster Grandparent and possibly earn a stipend to become involved in these programs or volunteer in schools. It was also explained that the Foster Grandparent program not only benefits the children, but also makes the older adults feel important because they still have talents to share and are a productive part of the growth of children.

Panel members for the evening were Carrie Maheu, McKay Area Lightning Rod, sharing about Jump Start and CaN Centers, Cathy Jarman and Kathy Astle shared about Assistance League of Salem® Programs, information about The IKE Box was shared by Mark Bulgin, Ike's Dad, and the Foster Grandparent program was discussed by Patrick Robertson, Director.

As our Valentine present to the children of Salem-Keizer, we collected new teddy bears that evening for the Salem Police Department. An officer from the police department arrived towards the end of the program and we presented the bears to him. He shared a few comments about the teddy bear program and thanked us for our donation.

Ending the program was the high school students singing "Free to Be You and Me." Panel members were then available for participants to visit with informally and ask any questions they might still have had.

It was important in the planning to find programs in our area that were free to everyone and ones that a lot of people hadn't heard about. Everyone knows about the great job with after school programs the Girls and Boys Club have and the Y's, but they charge a fee.

I would highly recommend doing a similar type of program in any community. You just have to research what programs are available in your area. We were able to do it without costing each chapter anything. Center 50+ provided the space, printed the programs, advertised in the Senior Paper, and provided the coffee and paper products without charging us anything. Each individual person bought a bear to donate if they wanted to. The only real cost was to the chapters who brought refreshments. The speakers were very good and enjoyed sharing about their programs. The choir students performed and helped with the set-up and clean-up as a community service project. It was a win-win situation for everyone!

Kathy Martell  
Alpha Epsilon Co-President