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the VOX



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The Vanessa Behan Crisis Nursery is a community investment

CORRINE SCHMIDT
Staff Reporter
FERRIS

Every day of the week, 24 hours a day, the Vanessa Behan Crisis Nursery is open to provide refuge for children and support to their families. Working to make sure that parents have a safe environment to bring their children to, this crisis nursery has served over 500,000 children since it first opened in 1987.

According to the Vanessa Behan Crisis Nursery Web site, "When parents find themselves in distress, (emotional, domestic violence, homelessness, depression, financial, etc.) they call the Crisis Nursery to ask for help."

The nursery then helps to alleviate the tension by providing 24-hour emergency child care, as well as parental education, crisis counseling and referrals to specialized organizations for extended help.

This organization was created after two-year-old Vanessa Behan died of severe physical abuse in Spokane in 1982. According to the Web site, "The sadness surrounding Vanessa's death prompted local businessman Bill Bialkowski to mount a campaign to establish a place where children would be safe and removed from harms way."

And since its first opening, this crisis nursery has worked to ensure that every child has a safe, welcoming place to go when in times of trouble. Last year alone, 3,963 children were kept safe.

Of course, none of this would be possible without the hundreds of volunteers who help to make this effort a reality. In fact, according to Amy Swanson, the Executive Director at the Vanessa Behan Crisis Nursery, there are between 100 and 600 volunteers. About 100 people work directly within the crisis nursery, and there are hundreds of others who help with anything from raising money and collecting donated supplies, to helping with janitorial duties.

To Swanson, volunteers are crucial to the nursery's success.

"My favorite aspect of the nursery is watching the children have fun," Swanson said. "Our volunteers and staff get on the floor and interact with the children and the children just really get to have fun and be themselves."

One such volunteer, Emily Wing, a senior at Ferris High School, considers the nursery an important aspect of the community. She volunteers there every Sunday for three hours.

"I think it's important that it's there to support the families and it's really focused on making better family relationships," Wing said. "They have parenting classes and it just supports making better lives for the children and families in the community."

Because volunteers are such an important part of the nursery's success, many precautions are taken when choosing those that will help be responsible for the safety of these children.

According to Swanson, potential volunteers start by filling out the application which can be found on the Vanessa Behan Crisis Nursery Web site www.vanessabehan.com. They then are interviewed and choose the specific area in which they would like to help. All volunteers go through a background check and training which includes a three-hour long orientation and on the job training.

According to Wing, she also had to sign numerous confidentiality papers. While she is only given the first names and ages of the children she helps, she is not even allowed to tell others this information for security reasons.

The nursery also limits their volunteers to ages 18 and higher with the exception of students in approved high school programs. For this reason, Wing is one of the youngest volunteers there.

Besides those who volunteer regularly, the crisis nursery also depends on contributions from businesses and individuals in the community. In fact, the Vanessa

Behan Web site states that the center's current budget of \$1.1 million is funded 97 percent from private contributions.

Wing believes that this community effort is part of what makes the crisis nursery so special.

"I know there is a lot of local help. A local builder made one of the play sets in the play room," Wing said. "That's another really good thing about Vanessa Behan. It's a really community-focused charity."

Overall, Wing would recommend this volunteer opportunity to anyone who qualifies.

"It might seem like it would be kind of sad, but it's actually a really rewarding experience," Wing said. "It's really fun and they are, well, they're kids. You really feel like you have an impact in helping them and it's an overall good experience to help out."

And while volunteers may not be able to tell anyone the names and ages of specific children, it does not mean that the nursery's services are a secret. Besides visiting their Web site for more information, the nursery has recently begun to have "Vanessa Promise" tours every Tuesday night at 4 p.m. in which the doors are opened for the public to see the different sections of the nursery.

"It's a relatively new thing and the center used to be more confidential but my hope is that we get the word out about what we do," Swanson said. "With the recent death of the of [a] little girl [caused from physical abuse] last week, I want people to know about what we do so that next time, somebody will let the mother know how to get help before it is too late."

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Spokesman Review file photo

Adult and teen volunteers unpack items for the Santa Express store last Christmas season. The profits from the store benefit the Vanessa Behan Crisis Nursery and is another way teens can get involved with the program.

Know Your World Leaders: Germany's Merkel earns "Iron Lady" reputation

VANESSA SWENSON
Staff Reporter
MT. SPOKANE

Name: Angela Merkel
Nickname: "The Iron Frau" or "The Iron Lady"
Age: 53
Occupation: Chancellor of Germany
In Office Since: November 22, 2005
Mixing Personality and Politics: Played the Rolling Stone's hit "Angie" at rallies for her 2005 campaign
Sign: Cancer
Quote: "It is nonsense to say that Germans are unable to change."

Angela Merkel is the first woman to ever lead Germany since it became a recognized modern nation-state in 1871.

She is viewed as one of the most powerful women in the world. As of the year 2008, Merkel is one of the two female leaders in Europe, the other being Yulia Tymoshenko, the Prime Minister of Ukraine.

Her earlier years would have never alluded to such a future of political power. Growing up in a rural area outside of Hamburg, Merkel excelled in the subjects of math and science. She went on to earn a doctorate in physics and write thesis papers on quantum chemistry. Merkel worked as a chemist at a scientific academy in East Berlin.

Her political flame sparked when she joined the burgeoning democracy movement in 1989 and took an active role in bringing down the Berlin Wall – an event that would turn her political spark into a hungry fire as she attained the job of government spokesperson following the first democratic elections.

Her membership in the Christian Democratic Union (CDU) several months later continued to fuel the fire as she was later named Secretary General of the organization in 1998.

Following this election, Merkel enjoyed considerable popularity with the German population and gained momentum in her political endeavors. In early 2006, following Merkel's September 2005 assumption of the position of Chancellor of Germany, she had the highest approval rate among Germans to be recorded for a chancellor since 1949.

Determined to improve the German economy and reduce unemployment, she was credited as being responsible for the "Merkel factor," a term used to refer to the increase in consumer confidence and market spending following her election.

Merkel's reform agenda substantially covered Germany's economic and social issues. She has advocated changes to German labor law and promoted removing barriers for firing employees and increasing the allowed number of work hours per week in order to make Germany more competitive in the world economy.

Merkel also argued for nuclear power in Germany to be phased out less quickly than was originally planned. Concerning foreign involvements, Merkel advocated a strong transatlantic partnership and German-American friendship. She was thoroughly criticized after announcing her support for the United States invasion of Iraq.

Merkel also critically viewed the accession of Turkey to the European Union and saw Turkey rather as a "privileged partnership."

Despite her actions being seen from opposing viewpoints, recent polls still show Merkel as having a 60 percent approval rate of her performance in office. Merkel continues her international efforts in the Middle East by offering Germany's help to get Israeli and Palestinians back to the negotiating table and has also pushed for efforts for renewed peace talks.

To say the least, Angela Merkel is a very powerful lady, both domestically and internationally, as her networking and political skills reflect that she truly lives up to her reputation as an "Iron Lady."



Graphic by: Caroline O'Grady / Lewis and Clark

Angela Merkel

A work in progress



Lauren Colton / Photo Editor

Mead High School senior Ethan Matthews forms a piece on a throwing wheel while in pottery class. This is his second time taking pottery, this time as an advanced student.

QUOTE OF THE ISSUE

"If a guy were to take the time to write a thoughtful letter rather than send a grammatically incorrect text ... he would be that much more likely to get into my pants."
— Katie Todaro, "Technology," page 4

FUN FACT

On average, a four-year-old child asks 437 questions a day.

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