

## Pell Grant Rates Declining

By Robin Estrin  
Associated Press Writer

Higher education is becoming out of reach for many low-income families as federal grant money erodes and college costs continue to soar, researchers say.

Student grants are covering a significantly diminishing proportion of college pricetags, according to a study released Tuesday. Pell grants - the major federal funding source for low-income students - provide about half of what they did 20 years ago.

About 3.6 million of the nation's 14 million college students receive Pell grants, and more than half of Pell recipients in four-year schools qualify for maximum funding.

According to the study released by the The Education Resources Institute and The Institute for Higher Education Policy, the average Pell grant covered 19 percent of the cost of attending a private, four-year institution in the 1976-77 school year and 39 percent of the price of a public four-year school. "I did not have a choice as to where I went to school because of the outrageous tuition rates it was either Delaware County or Penn State Delco," said Frank Barbosa.

In 1996-97, the most recent year available for the study, the average grant covered just 9 percent for private schools, and 22 percent for public.

More striking, the maximum Pell grant - given to the neediest students - fell from covering 35 percent of private college costs in 1976-77 to only 13 percent in 1996-97; for public schools, it dropped from covering 72 percent of the price to 34 percent.

"Because I could not get any aid, I now have to work so much that it cuts into my study time," said Paul Van De Boe.

"If low-income students don't attend community college, they cannot afford to go to college at all", said Thomas Parker, senior vice

president of The Education Resources Institute, a Boston-based nonprofit guarantor of privately issued student loans.

"What we like to think is we have a system where people have both access and choice, but what we're rapidly developing is a system where people have access but not choice," he said.

The average Pell grant award declined by 23 percent - adjusting for inflation - over two decades, but college prices rose by 49 percent, and family incomes crept up by just 10 percent over the same period. A 1 - though the maximum amount for Pell grants has increased slightly in recent years, the growth hasn't kept pace with rising college costs, Parker said.

In 1996-97, the maximum Pell grant available was \$2,470 for qualifying students. In 1997-98, it went up to \$2,700 and is at \$3,000 for the current year.

"Even with those increases, the bottom line is the net price still increases for most families, particularly for the lowest-income students," said Jamie Merisotis, president of the Washington-based policy institute.

While federal grant dollars have declined over the last two decades, the amount of grant money colleges and universities give to students has stayed the same, said Jacqueline King, director of policy analysis for the American Council on Education, which represents some 1,800 colleges nationwide.

Still, she said, low-income students should be able to attend a four-year college if they take college-preparatory classes in high school and apply for financial assistance from the government as well as from universities.

In 1995-96, King said, the average cost of attending a two-year public community college, including tuition, room and board, was \$7,265 for a full-time student without financial aid. For a public four-year university, it was \$10,889, and for a private college the average was \$19,443.

From staff and wire reports

## Big Brother-Big Sister Programs Help Children

By Regis Fields  
Lion's Eye Staff Writer

Penn State University Delaware County has seen many forms of volunteerism that have come in the ways of educating children who need the extra help, to dancing the night away to help with medical research. As the need for social activism grows, many Penn State students have answered the call and given time out of a rigorous school schedule to lend a hand. And the hands keep coming. You can just ask Stephanie Jones, a first year student here at Delaware County who appropriately can be found at the Volunteer Center in the Commons Building. And what does she do? She jumps into leaves and goes roller-skating with her little sister 7 year old Maritza Melendez. No they're not biological sisters, just a big sister and a little sister.

Big Brother-Big Sister is a program that has been going on for over a decade now in which underprivileged single parent children from ages 7 to 17 pair up with an older counterpart who is there to show that child the brighter sides of life.

"When I was in elementary school I saw a child with a big brother...since then I knew I wanted to do that," said Jones passionately. She has been a big sister to Maritza for a year now helping her with educational subjects as well as just hav-

ing fun and being a mentor. The Big Brother-Big Sister organization that she operates out of is in West Chester, Pa and is the branch of that organization for Chester County. Other local branches include Media and Upper Darby, two towns about eight miles apart from each other in Delaware County.

The road to becoming a big brother or sister is a semi-arduous one.

"You have three interviews, two are at the agency, and one is at your home where they (the interviewers) walk all over your house checking things out...after that is done and you get a sister, the first two months you have to call and check in every week," said Jones.

As well as a character check, qualifications for being a big sibling include a mandatory age of 18 or older. Married couples are also welcome to become big people as the need for volunteers grows due to a waiting list of children that exceeds 100 in size. The program offers no special credit for students that wish to participate in the program, but that should really stop no one. Volunteers are welcome and the numbers for the Delaware County offices are (610) 566-5134 for Media and 352-7255 for the Upper Darby office. The Chester County number is (610) 436-4275 and that is the office in West Chester. If anyone needs more information on this Stephanie Jones is available in the Volunteer Center.



So who's cuter?

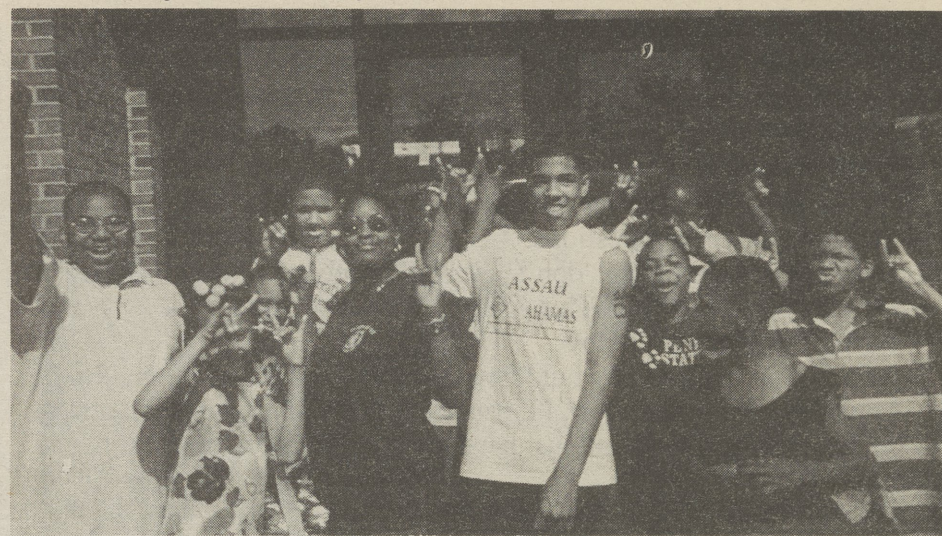
### Toy Drive:

## 'Tis the Season for Giving

By Jenna Montgomery  
Lion's Eye Staff Writer

Spanish 3 class is sponsoring a toy drive for underprivileged children of Chester. Senora Lawrence and students ask that people donate inexpensive new or used toys in good condition. These should be appropriate for kids up to 8 years in age. Please wrap and tag gifts, designat-

ing the age/sex of the child to receive it. However, gift-wrap is not required. All contributions may be placed in the boxes stationed in classrooms 219 or 312 of the Main Building. The toy drive ends Monday, Dec. 7<sup>th</sup> so please act now, and give generously. All gifts will be taken to a church in Chester for dispersal over the holiday season.



Ten good reasons for volunteering.

## Caribbean Style Party

Friday Dec. 4

at

Penn State Delco

D.J. Swift

9 pm to 2 am

Cost \$3 with PSU ID • \$5 for others

*Come Feel The Vibes*