

Students help their peers find solutions

By GRACE R. DOVE
Post Staff

Abuse. Neglect. Thoughts of suicide. Rape. Substance addiction. Low self-esteem. Failing grades. These subjects are not taught in any high school. But they are problems faced daily by an increasing number of high school students.

In an effort to deal with these situations, Peer Helpers, a special program of students helping other students was instituted at Lake-Lehman High School four years ago.

Peer Helpers are students who have been trained to assist other students who are struggling with personal and school problems.

"We are friends for new students, helping them to become familiar with the building, their teachers, school activities and other students," group members explained.

"We tutor students having problems with classwork. We talk with students who appear to be having problems and refer them to guidance for professional help if necessary."

Peer Helpers also provide friendly faces for students re-entering school from drug and alcohol or mental health treatment programs. "It's tough for a student to return to school and try to make

new friends while trying to avoid old friends who still have access to drugs and alcohol," explained Peer Helper Greg Dobash.

According to guidance counselor Florence Finn, each Peer Helper is nominated by his fellow students; the present Peer Helpers and the guidance department make the final selection.

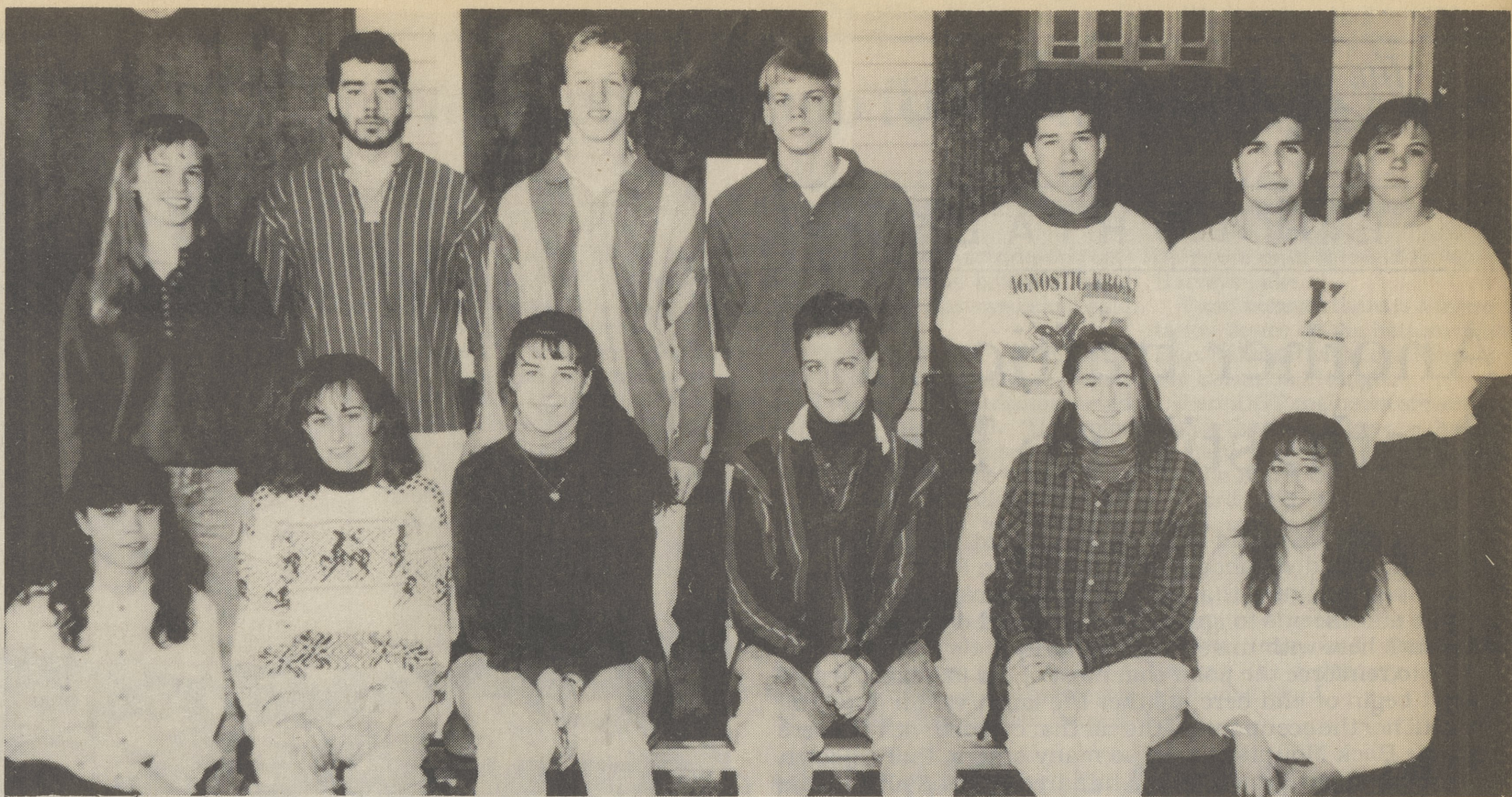
Peer Helper training consists of a weekend retreat staffed by Ms. Finn and Carl Graver, vice president of the Pennsylvania Peer Helpers' Association, to teach reflective listening skills, role playing and when it is appropriate to refer a troubled student for professional help.

Monthly meetings at alternating Peer Helpers' homes keep the group in touch with one another, giving them a support system and providing further training.

Graver was so impressed with Lake-Lehman's Peer Helper training program that he invited 18 group members to present a workshop at the 10th annual Peer Helpers' Association conference at Kutztown University Monday, March 16.

The workshop was a role-playing exercise about a student returning to school from a drug rehabilitation program and the possible situations that he might face.

The Peer Helpers say that being



STUDENTS HELPING OTHER STUDENTS - Lake-Lehman High School's Peer Helpers include, front row from left: Jessi Kenney, Lynn Turner, Debbie Coslett, Jeff Sands, Gretchen Dershimer and

Ann Barber; second row from left: Karen Komsisky, Chuck Finn, Ernie Chamberlain, Dan Luaksavage, Charlie Jacoby, Greg Dobash and Jonelle Pall. (Post photo/Grace R. Dove)

in a position of responsibility and strict confidence has made a difference in their lives. All agreed with Lynn Turner that they had made many new friends.

"It has made me more aware of the problems that people my age might have," said Gretchen Dershimer.

"Helping other students has helped me to see new ways to cope with situations in my own life," continued Jeff Sands.

Greg Dobash felt that being a Peer Helper had made him more sensitive to others' needs. "I've learned a lot about respect for other people, how to relate to them

and to be honest with myself as well as others. And having a sense of humor sure helps," he said.

"Being a Peer Helper is definitely not a popularity contest," Ms. Finn said. "The students need Peer Helpers whom they can trust, who will try to understand them, who they know will not break the

rule of absolute confidentiality."

Ms. Finn has observed "borderline" students strengthen themselves as they work as Peer Helpers. Quoting a Pennsylvania Department of Education report, Ms. Finn called the Peer Helpers program the most significant tool for drug and alcohol prevention in the schools.

Brian Achuff earns the Boy Scout Eagle Award

The Eagle Scout Award, the highest and most distinguished award in scouting was recently presented to Brian J. Achuff. He is the son of John A. and Lucille M. Achuff of Dallas. He is the grandson of Mr. and Mrs. Edmund Mussel of Luzerne, and Mr. and Mrs. Louis Achuff of Hunlock Creek. He is also the great-grandson of Mrs. Edna Achuff of Dallas.

Brian is a member of Troop 281 Dallas, sponsored by the Dallas United Methodist Church. He was honored at a ceremony and a reception was held at the church. Paul Kutish, Committee Chairman; Jeffrey Townsend, Assistant Scoutmaster, and Charles Wasse-rott IV, Scoutmaster, conducted the ceremony and presented the Eagle Award to Brian.

Donald Miller, representing the Boy Scouts of America gave the charge from scouting; Rev. Michael Bealla, Pastor, Dallas United Methodist Church, the charge from the church; Gilbert Griffiths, Assistant Superintendent, Dallas School District, the charge from the school, and Senator Charles D. Lemmond the charge from the community. Also, presenting an award to Brian was State Representative Phyllis Mundy.

Brian joined Troop 155 in 1985 as a Cub Scout. Upon moving in 1986, he transferred to Troop 281 where he earned 23 merit badges, trophies, and served as Quartermaster, Troop Guide, and Assistant Senior Patrol Leader.

Brian's Eagle Scout project consisted of cleaning and making



BRIAN ACHUFF

rock pathways over wet areas along the Laurel Run Trail, and cutting out a new trail called the Sandy Run. These trails are located at the Seven Tubs Nature Area located off Route 115 in Wilkes-Barre. Scouts and adults of Troop 281 and relatives helped Brian complete his project which took nearly 200 hours.

A freshman student at Dallas Senior High School, Brian is a member of the soccer team and track team.

GOP to hold 'Meet the Candidates Night'

The Back Mountain Republicans will hold a special meeting, "Meet the Candidates Night". The meeting will be held at the Kingston Township Municipal Building, Carverton Road, Trucksville, Wednesday, April 1. All Republican candidates are invited. No formal invitations will be sent. Meeting and refreshments will be free of charge. All interested Back Mountain residents are welcome.

Regular meeting will be at 7:30 p.m. Meet the Candidates at 8 p.m.

Flower Club plans anniversary dinner April 7

The West Side Flower Club will hold its 59th Anniversary Dinner on Tuesday, April 7 at the Knights of Columbus, Luzerne. The Rev. Gerard Salko, assistant pastor of Gate of Heaven Church, Dallas, will offer invocation.

President Kunigonis will announce the name of one club member whom the Board has selected for Life Membership.

The pre-dinner social will be held from 6 to 6:30 p.m. with dinner at 6:30 p.m. Doors open at 5:30 p.m. Tickets may be obtained from Marion Kunigonis or Irene Yasenchak before Friday, April 3.



CHURCH ORGAN DEDICATED - St. Paul's Lutheran Church's organist Dr. Howard A. Swain, Jr., sits at the 75-year-old instrument's refurbished console with Jeffrey Baer and Dr. Douglas I. Smith of Bethesda, Maryland. (Post photo/Grace R. Dove)

75-year-old St. Paul's organ is refurbished, dedicated

By GRACE R. DOVE
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After many months of refurbishing, the 75-year-old pipe organ at St. Paul's Lutheran Church in Shavertown was dedicated in a recital Sunday afternoon, March 29.

The program featured Jeffrey S. Baer, organist, assisted by flutist Douglas I. Smith, playing several Bach preludes, and Mozart's Ave Verum, as well as works by other composers.

Baer, the son of St. Paul's Pas-

tor Harold Baer, is organist for Bethesda United Methodist Church in Salisbury, MD., where Smith is director of music.

The organ's renovations included the addition of several ranks of new pipes, repair of existing pipes and upgrading the console's old action with an electronic one, according to the church secretary. The project cost approximately \$76,000, most of which was raised through donations by church members. Fundraising events made up the difference.

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