

## Jaycees 75th Anniversary: Jaycees a community asset since 1933

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**By Lindsay Blake**

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Created in June 1933, the Council Bluffs Jaycees have been giving young adults, between the ages of 21 and 40, the tools and support needed to build the bridges of success in the areas of business development, management, leadership and personal training, community and governmental involvement.

"Our chapter has focused mainly on our community," said Marsha Hoffman, secretary and marketing director of the Council Bluffs Jaycees chapter.

The group holds its annual Labor Day Street Dance in the parking lot north of the Scott Street Pub to raise funds for the other Jaycees events. The street dance, the group's largest fundraising event, draws nearly 2,000 people from around the area.

Funds raised at the street dance are distributed through the Jaycees' philanthropic events, including the annual Easter Egg Hunt, a children's activity booth at Celebrate CB, the Christmas shopping spree for disadvantaged youth and Run, Punt and Pass.

The annual Easter Egg Hunt is an organized hunt during the Easter season for children within the Council Bluffs community. It is held around the soccer field area at Roberts Park; children gather plastic eggs filled with goodies prepared by the Jaycees.

"The community is wonderful about giving donations as well," Hoffman said. "With their help, we are able to give back."

The Easter Bunny and representatives from the Council Bluffs Fire Department and the Council Bluffs Police Department visit with children during the event.

Money raised from the Labor Day Street Dance is used to fund a Christmas shopping spree for disadvantaged children. The Department of Human Services selects needy children between the ages of 5 and 11 to participate. The children not only use the donations to buy gifts for their families, but also are provided dinner, goody bags and visits from Santa and Blackjack, the Iowa Blackhawk's mascot.

The Run, Punt and Pass event is statewide among the Jaycees organizations and is held for youths ages 8 to 14. The event allows the children to showcase their talents in basic football skills. The youth throw for distance, punt for distance and run a zigzag course for distance and time. The top six finishers are given awards and the opportunity to compete in the state event.

"We are learning valuable skills while we work with different businesses and agencies for our events and fundraisers," Hoffman said. "We are fulfilling the five building blocks from our mission statement."

Previous Jaycees community projects include the War Memorial Fund from 1948, the Golden Spike renovation and landscaping in 1962 and more recently, the construction of the Dream Playground near Lake Manawa in the early 1990s.

"Although the Dream Playground project predates our current membership, we know that is the kind of project that has a lasting impact, which is something we strive for," Hoffman said.

Many in the community may also remember Jaycees selling Christmas trees during the holiday season.

The Jaycees organization has also contributed to the Council Bluffs Library Building Fund and Children's Book Program, the Council Bluffs Community Schools Summer Reading Program, YMCA programs, local school trips, Hurricane Katrina disaster relief and once a year gives a scholarship to a local graduating senior.