

Volunteers Needed at GT Norman Elementary by Kris Griffin, Assistant Principal

It is not a secret that school districts around our state are struggling. With that said, the need for volunteers has never been so great. Budget cuts have forced schools to cut back for the last few years. Reductions have been made in several areas and have included staff, people working with our children.

GT Norman Elementary is no exception to this. This year, we have lost some of our Paraprofessional staff, a secretary, and reduced our librarian to half time. It is feared that our teaching staff will also be reduced next year and, therefore, our class sizes will increase.

What can YOU do? We need your help. There are many volunteer opportunities available at our school. I will try and highlight a few of them for you.

The LIFT program continues to function at Norman. The program coordinator recently moved to another position in the district; however, Pam Remus has taken over the program. The program now operates only in the morning instead of all day. Volunteers work with our students who struggle with reading. The students are identified through testing and from their classroom teacher. This is an excellent opportunity to work one on one with a child who needs some extra help.

Do you like the outdoors? Our playground could always benefit from extra adult supervision. We have two adults outside with each grade level, which are over 100 students. You could play games with the students, talk, go sledding, or just provide that extra adult presence. On rainy days or days that are too cold to go outside, we really need extra people to cover each of the classrooms.

Do you like a lot of noise, spilled milk, or messy food? Come help out in the cafeteria! I know it doesn't sound all that appealing, but the kids really can be fun. Lots of times, they just need help opening things up or forget to get something in the cafeteria line or, my favorite, "I need ranch dressing." You should see the things that kids put ranch dressing on! It is not difficult work, it is just busy and crazy for a couple of hours.

There are always volunteer opportunities in the classroom as well. Teachers are always looking for volunteers to work with students who need extra help or, sometimes, the students who are advanced and need to be challenged. We may need volunteers to make copies, help send out mailings, correct papers, help shelve books in the library ...the list could go on and on.

Our Parent Teacher Organization (PTO) does many great things for our elementary school. They raise thousands of dollars each year to give our students extra opportunities. However, they would also like to have more people helping out. I attend the meetings each month, and it tends to be the same people at the meetings. As my Grandma always said, "many hands make much lighter work."

If you are interested in volunteering at GT Norman Elementary call us at 832-5548. As challenging as it can be to work with young children, the rewards are much greater. A day doesn't go by, that I don't leave the building with something funny or heart warming that a child does or says. Most of the time, it is many things!