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Big Buddies Volunteer Time for Kids

by Nicole Wong

HOYA Assistant Staff Writer

Georgetown students are giving their time to help mentally retarded children in the Washington area through the recently organized Big Buddy program on campus. The program was started by Anthony Shriver (CAS '88) who has been a big brother in DC for the last two years.

The objective of the Big Buddy program is to give retarded children the same treatment and attention which is currently given to minority children through similar groups. "The whole concept is more a socialization program," said Shriver. "We want to get these kids out of their own little worlds and into the wider world."

Fifty students are currently paired with a "little buddy". Most of the retarded people come from Lt. Joseph S. Kennedy school in downtown Washington. However, more of the mentally handicapped people participating in the program were selected from the National Childrens Center in order to meet the large number of Georgetown students who were interested in the program, according to Shriver. For the most part, these children are confined to public or foster homes.



Photo by Benjamin Patton

Anthony Shriver (CAS '88) organized GU's Big Buddy Program.

The Big Buddy program is run on an honor system. It only asks that the students visit their "little buddies" two times each month. The program does not grant academic credit to students involved or check on their visits. "This [granting credit] would be defeating the program's purpose," said Shriver. "The student shouldn't be driven by anything else but the desire to help someone else."

As much as they are helping these children, however, the Big Buddy program is a "two-way street", according

to Stuart Holliday (SFS '88) who recently started with the program. Having a little buddy "is not a chore," said Holliday. The buddies do things together such as attend movies or local sports events. "The crux of the program is to develop friendship," Holliday added.

The program received financial support from the Kennedy Foundation and advice on organization and structure from the "Love of Children" Washington group.

1987 Article on "Big Buddies"

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