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Workers dig dirt in preparation for laying the foundation for a new sidewalk in the backyard of Stepping Stone Shelter Wednesday afternoon. The sidewalk will feature bricks purchased by businesses and community members to help this year's Leadership Enrichment and Development class with its Big Give project to make improvements at the shelter. L&T photo/Robert Pierce

By ROBERT PIERCE

• Leader & Times

Thanks to some grants that came in at the beginning of 2014, Liberal's Stepping Stone Shelter currently has a good financial standing, according to its director.

That, however, will likely change later in the year, and the money raised from a fundraiser later

this month will go a long way toward limiting the damage from a lack of funding in the latter part of the year.

For the ninth year, Stepping Stone is hosting its annual fundraiser, Spring Sing Bar-B-Que Thing, and director Pat Allsbury said there are a few changes in this year's event, starting with the day it will take place.

"We've always had it on a Sunday," she said. "We're going to try it Saturday evening from 5 to 7. Instead of multiple miscellaneous acts, we're going to have the RBC Band playing. Plate prices are still \$10, but the ticket prices for the raffle changed. The raffle is still a 42-inch TV and a Kindle Fire HD. The tickets are \$1 each or six for \$5."



Those times are for Saturday, April 26, and Allsbury said those coming to the Spring Sing event will likewise to get see the new playground equipment and a new sidewalk in the shelter's backyard, all provided courtesy of this year's Big Give project from the Leadership Enrichment and Development class.

Allsbury said Spring Sing has grown every year, and even with this year's changes, she's hoping the same for 2014's edition of the event.

"Any time you make a change, it's taking a chance, and we're taking a chance this year hopefully for a better result," she said.

Spring Sing has become Stepping Stone's biggest fundraiser and continues to get bigger, but Allsbury said although the event makes a huge difference to the shelter's financial situation, the impact it makes is still small compared to the grants the shelter receives.

For this reason, Stepping Stone relies much on donations from the local community.

“We get donations from the local churches, local organizations, businesses,” Allsbury said. “We get a lot.”

The donations don't stop at money either, according to Stepping Stone's director. The shelter gets food from a couple of local businesses as well.

“They're donating to the Kansas Food Bank, but we're the satellite for it,” she said. “In 2013, it was a total of 135,413 pounds from mostly Walmart, but Dillon's contributed. It averages about 1,300 pounds per trip twice a week.”

Allsbury said not all of that food is kept at the shelter, though.

“We get it here,” she said. “We have to record the weight and the temperature. We take out what we need to prepare the meals we're cooking. What's left, other agencies come in, and they take it all away to put into their food boxes to give out.”

Allsbury added the first-of-the-year grants have put Stepping Stone in good shape financially, but she projected that trend will not continue through the end of the year.

“So many of our large grants come at the first of the year,” she said. “By the time September, October, November roll around, we're starting to feel pains.”

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