

By ROBERT PIERCE • Daily Leader After years of competing on the sidelines, K-State head football coach Bill Snyder and former Nebraska head football coach Tom Osborne are back at again – in the 2010 Coaches' Challenge, sponsored by Big Brothers Big Sisters.

Joining Snyder and Osborne for this year will be Kansas head football coach Turner Gill. The Coaches' Challenge wages which state, Kansas or Nebraska, can sign up the most new mentors this fall.

Locally, Kerry Seibel of BBBS of Haskell, Seward and Stevens Counties said there are currently more than 1,400 kids that are considered children in need of care.

“Our goal would be to get at least 200 of them matches in Seward County,” she said. “We need volunteers desperately. We have two different programs that are community based and are site based.”

This is the third year of the Coaches' Challenge, with Kansas winning both of the previous years, and Seibel hopes that streak continues.

“We're giving bigs and littles a chance to go to a Kansas football game,” she said. “This is the first year that the KU coach has hooked up with the Kansas side of it. Snyder and Osborne have done it in the past years.”

Seibel said the Liberal office is offering every mentor who signs up a chance to win tickets to either K-State or KU football games. She said there is a waiting list of 30 kids at this time, and since the start of school, that list has grown.

“We're receiving referrals,” she said. “People think because of their age or time constraints that they can't become a mentor. They have to be at least 15 and a sophomore in high school, and after that, there's no limit.”

In fact, Seibel said there are local mentors in their 50s and 60s, and those people make just as much of an impact on children as younger people.

“There's no restrictions on ages, and time constraints, it only takes an hour to really make a difference in a child's life, especially when they're considered at risk,” she said. “Every little bit that they can do for a child will certainly help our community.”

Seibel said youth are in need of positive role models, and Snyder, Gill and Osborne know the importance of mentoring. Snyder serves as chair of Kansas Mentors, and Osborne leads efforts in Nebraska's TeamMates Mentoring Program.

“These youngsters need our help,” Snyder said. “Being a mentor doesn't require a lot of time or any money. We are asking for an individual to spare an hour a week to spend time with a young person in the community.”

Those interested can take the Coaches' Challenge by contacting Kansas Big Brothers Big Sisters at 888-KS4-BIGs or go to www.kansasbig.org, call Seibel, Maggie Sale or Marvina Colvin at 624-9000, or stop by the office at 505 N. Kansas in Liberal.

"They can go online and do an application, or they're more than welcome to contact us here at the office," Seibel said.

The deadline to sign up for the challenge is Nov. 24.