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The Lady Saints gather at Stepping Stone Shelter in Liberal prior to the "Chili Run." The Lady Saints volunteered to help with the fund-raising event. Courtesy photo

By ROY ALLEN

Seward sports information director

On a cold early January morning, just a couple months after winning their first Jayhawk West Championship in seven years, the Seward County Lady Saints volleyball team woke up bright and early and helped the Stepping Stone Shelter of Liberal conduct their fundraising "Chili Run."

Getting there as the sun began to peek over the horizon, the Lady Saints were briefed on the days happenings, given their instructions, and headed out to their jobs. The girls did a variety of tasks including registering runners, making course maps, and serving as traffic directors along the race route.

The Stepping Stone Shelter first had the 5K run/walk followed by the 1 mile prediction run/walk. In spite of it being a chilly morning, Stepping Stone coordinator Susan Lukwago described the bunch as "wonderful and very cheerful" as they cheered and encouraged the 50 or so runners during the races. The coaches did not get the day off either as Head Coach Bert Luallen and assistant coach Alana Rowland were at the finish line jotting down completion times and organizing results as runners completed their days.

“We are very grateful to the coaches and players for assisting us again this year” Lukwago said. “We were able to raise close to \$435 for the shelter this year and we could not have done it without the Seward County volleyball team” she continued.

The team said they needed no thanks for the opportunity to help and that they enjoy being there for the Stepping Stone Shelter. “It is such a great chance for us to give back just a little bit to this community that supports us so greatly” sophomore setter Taryn Westerman said. “We love to see the smile on people’s faces and know that we are helping a great cause” freshman Maddy Taylor said. “I know that all of us freshman are looking forward to coming back and helping again next year” Jayhawk West Freshman of the Year Sheina Fernandes added.

Assistant coach Alana Rowland said that the event is good for a number of reasons for her and Head Coach Bert Luallen’s Lady Saints team. “Not only is it good for our girls to come out and support such a great organization like the Stepping Stone Shelter, but this is a good opportunity for them to realize how good they really do have it here at Seward County and it gets them into that good feeling of giving back to those who maybe aren’t as lucky as they are” she said.

The Lady Saints remain in the midst of their offseason before hitting the floor again in Mid-March as they begin a short Spring season in preparation for trying to defend their Jayhawk West Title next Fall.

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