

BIDDING FOR A *Wonderful*

By James Combs

The Lake Sumter Children's Advocacy will conduct its fourth annual "Bids for Kids" fundraiser from April 23-26. It will conclude with an invitation-only barbecue and silent auction celebration at The Villages Polo Club on Saturday.

"Last year, we raised more than \$63,000 and only had \$263 in fundraising expenses," said Executive Director Diane Piszczek. "I thought that was phenomenal and shows the tremendous community support we receive. This is run by our dedicated, compassionate Board of Directors who believe in the organization and what it does."

A complete list of auction items will be published in The Daily Commercial during the community-wide telephone auction. The wide selection of items includes golf packages, dinner packages, vacation getaways, jewelry, artwork and much more. To make a bid, participants can call the event's phone bank, which will be manned from 5:30-8 p.m. Wednesday through Friday and from noon to 7 p.m. on Saturday. The newspaper will update the current high bids daily. "Hundreds of people participated last year because they support our cause," Diane said.

The Lake Sumter Children's Advocacy Center helps children overcome sexual and physical abuse by



Executive Director
Diane Piszczek



coordinating and providing services to children and families.

The organization serves as 'one-stop shopping' where victims receive all the services they need at one location. "This center spares children the trauma of being interviewed and telling their stories over and over again to unfamiliar adults," Diane said. "We provide counseling, forensic interviews and medical exams."

Diane dispels the myth that working with abused children is a disheartening job. "We give the kids toys and have a playground, so we do hear a lot of laughter and giggles," she said. "That's when we know the healing process begins, and there is no greater feeling than giving their childhood back to them."

The organization's Board of Directors includes: Paula J. Stinson, Alex Ogilvie III, Sue Purdy, Mike Pederson, Tim Camp, Vaneese Collins, Terry Elwood, Peggy Fuller, Sarah Jane Hewitt, Meredith Kirste, Jill McDowell, Diane Louis, Donna D. Richey, Henry Richter, Howard Rogers, Daniel Skidmore, Pete Wahl and Linda Galloway. ❖

For more information, contact the Lake-Sumter Children's Advocacy Center at (352) 343-6200 in Tavares and at (352) 568-3152 in Bushnell.