

Kids' fundraiser moves online

NICOLE KING

Staff Writer

LEESBURG — A partnership between *The Daily Commercial* and a local children's agency is expected to raise thousands of dollars for the organization. The Lake Sumter Children's Advocacy Center is bringing its annual Bids for Kids Auction online this year with the newspaper's help.

The center offers free services to physically and sexually abused children in Lake and Sumter counties, including forensic medical exams, counseling and pet therapy.

"All the money goes to the center," said Christine Heaton, member of the Center's Board of Directors. "We do get grant money, state as well as from private corporations, but without this annual fundraiser, we could not keep our doors open. We don't charge any of our clients."

This is the seventh year for the auction, but the first time it will be offered online. Last year, the auction raised more than \$100,000. *The Daily Commercial* has sponsored the event every year.

Some of the items being auctioned

off are a new car from Cindy Clark Chevrolet, jewelry, gift certificates and concert tickets.

"We're very fortunate to have a lot of the major corporations around the area help us," Heaton said.

Ron Wallace, publisher of *The Daily Commercial*, said he's looking forward to this year's auction.

"This is a major event. The children can't do this themselves; it's totally dependent on people like Christine and the many volunteers who work at the Children's Advocacy Center. By going online, we're giving people who maybe wouldn't have had the opportunity to participate before, to participate from their own home," Wallace said.

Aaron Pinkus, IT director for HarborPoint Media, is running the online auction. He said he was happy to help.

"I'm very excited. This is giving them the opportunity to hit a much wider base. During their live auction, they were only able to sell items based on who was there," Pinkus said. "I'm excited for us, the newspaper, to be able to help out such a great agency like the Children's Advocacy Center."

See FUNDRAISER, A4

FUNDRAISER

From A3

The Commercial's Marketing Director, Ed Rizzo, worked for months putting the auction together.

"I think it's great. It's a great opportunity for a local organization to increase their visibility and earning potential," he said.

Bidding starts at 9 a.m. today and will last until 9 p.m. March 4. You can bid at www.daily-commercial.com. Find out more about the Lake Sumter Children's Advocacy Center at <http://home.earthlink.net/~cac4kids>.