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# COURIER-JOURNAL

## Southern Tier-Auburn Geneva

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### State Federation Concerned:

## Employable Blind: Most Don't Have Jobs

By MARTIN TOOMBS  
Southern Tier Editor

**Horseheads**—The 1,000-member state Federation of the Blind is "becoming more and more successful all the time" in its advocacy goals, stated Sterling France, the group's president in an interview recently.

But employment remains a serious problem, as nationwide 70 percent of employable blind persons are without jobs.

The Federation of the Blind is an organization primarily of blind persons, France noted, and is separate from the Associations for the Blind, which are usually run by

sighted persons. "We are the consumers of services, and the Associations for the Blind are the providers of services," he explained.

France became the state federation's president in March, 1976, he said, completing another person's term; he was elected to a two-year term in October, 1977. Blind himself, he conducts federation business, and his piano-tuning service, from his home in Horseheads.

The state federation received Campaign for Human Development funding for a workshop last October designed to educate employers. The workshop brought Dr. Kenneth Jer-

nigan, president of the National Federation of the Blind, and James Gashel, chief of the organization's Washington office, to Elmira to speak with local industry's personnel officers.

At that workshop France pointed out that the common "misconception that if you lose your sight you lose the capability to do anything else" contributed to the 70 percent unemployment rate among employable blind persons.

Dr. Jernigan emphasized that blind people are often assumed to be less competent than the least competent sighted person. He related several instances when employers rejected blind

applicants simply because a sighted person had once failed in the position. He stated that blind persons can compete on the job market with sighted persons, if they are not rejected because of misconceptions about blindness.

Such employment workshops are part of the federation's efforts to get jobs for blind persons, France said. Despite affirmative action, he pointed out, the employment situation for the blind "looks no better and if anything it looks worse" for the future.

Other problems with employment include state laws, France related. Currently an agency that

wants to hire a blind person under Civil Service must receive a recommendation from the Commission for the Blind, France said. No other prospective employee must get such approval, he noted. One man who was refused a job because of a lack of recommendation from the commission "had a backbone and went to war" with the agencies, France reported, and now is on the job, at least temporarily. Such a requirement is discriminatory, France said, and should be removed.

Those who work in blind workshops also are a concern, he noted. The state's Industries for the Blind, which was "set up to distribute orders received from state agencies" to "blind workshops throughout the state," France explained, recently has been investigated for corruption. The impending reform should improve conditions in the workshops, he commented, as Industries for the Blind "has been saying for a long time that we can't afford to do this because . . ." The audits being conducted are disproving their statements, France reported.

Another item of concern is the state schools for the blind, France said. The federation currently is helping a girl in a school for the blind who was given a small-print text for her class work, he noted, instead of the large print she needs. Her mother asked him to help, he said, explaining that the school said the text was available only in Braille and small print. France found that it was available in large print, and the school responded that they didn't have the money for the large print book. Such problems shouldn't occur in a school specializing with the visually handicapped, France said.

In the meantime, France said, he discovered a regulation stating that text books be no more than five years old; the text in question was published in 1960, he said.

The federation also is assisting school districts with their new responsibilities to educate all children in their district, France said. The organization has offered workshops for educators and one-to-one assistance to blind persons who wish to attend public school. It is becoming common for blind children to complete their education in public schools, he said. He recalled one local boy who finished his last three years of high school in his own district, and is now a student in the Cornell Law School.

Funding for federation activities is a problem, France said. He stated that donations to the state Federation of the Blind may be sent to him at his 106 Pine Circle, Horseheads, address.

The federation also is interested in gaining new members, he said, especially those in rural areas with whom the federation has had little contact.

### Alcoholism Seminar Set

**Elmira**—Jamie Rattray, Corning Free Academy health educator, will speak on the SHIPP Program (School, Home, Industry Primary Prevention Program) at the alcoholism seminar in St. Joseph's Hospital's Doctors Meeting Room Thursday, Jan. 19, at 12:15 p.m.

Further information can be obtained by contacting the STARS Program, 733-5519.

## Jester Teaches at Epiphany Mass

By MARTIN TOOMBS  
Southern Tier Editor

**Watkins Glen**—Kings, like Herod who reigned in Israel during the birth of Christ, often had court jesters, whose responsibility it was to remind the king that "he was not God."

With that introduction by Father Andrew Kalafsky, St. Mary of the Lake pastor, during the Mass Saturday evening Jan. 6, a court jester, dressed as a clown in white and black, entered the sanctuary.

The parish children, dressed as the Magi for the Epiphany celebration, had just finished presenting gifts to the Christ child represented in the manger, and were sitting in front of the creche under the altar.

The organ provided background music, but the jester didn't speak as he made a crown for himself, and then placed a brightly decorated crown on the head of the

Christ child in the manger, and paid homage to the God made man.

And then, in a presentation which held the children's attention throughout, the jester told the Epiphany story through the use of finger puppets, with the three Magi represented on a hand with a white glove, and Herod represented on a black-gloved hand.

The jester then displayed on black cards the evil actions of persons such as Herod, and put them on a black display board. Then the good qualities of the Magi, including love, peace, giving and prayer, were displayed on white cards.

The jester then offered the children either a white or a black card. Quickly the white cards were distributed among the children and those in the pews. The jester was left with all the black cards, which he cast down next to the black display board.

His lesson completed, the



Father Mura as the jester.

jester began singing, expressing thanks to God for sending His Son. First the children and the choir joined him, and then the entire congregation.

Following the song, the jester, who was Father David Mura, parish associate, left the altar, and the Mass continued.

Following the Mass, the

## St. Joseph's Installs Heart Monitoring Equipment

By MARTIN TOOMBS  
Southern Tier Editor

**Elmira**—New equipment recently installed at St. Joseph's Hospital puts the hospital's heart monitoring capability "on a par or better" than any hospital in the area, Dr. Dominic Romeo, St. Joseph's cardiologist stated in describing the equipment Jan. 9.

The new system continuously diagnoses heartbeat irregularities. Installed in the existing Intensive Care Unit (ICU) and Coronary Care Unit (CCU), the computer services eight of 10 ICU beds, and the four beds in CCU. The computer system also has the capability of monitoring through telemetry four patients in nearby rooms on the sixth floor. Telemetry allows freedom of movement by the heart patient while being monitored by the computer. Such patients are equipped with a small radio transmitter, about the size of a deck of cards, which beams its

signal to the monitoring station.

The old system required that a nurse witness a heartbeat irregularity in order to record it for analysis. The new computerized system features a nine-hour memory of the patient's heartbeats and will quickly display the patterns for the previous four alarm-causing disturbances.

The addition of the memory maximizes monitoring capability, and frees nurses for more direct bedside care.

The equipment was installed by the Hewlett  
**A. W. BELBY & SON**  
Funeral Home  
James Rosell  
Darrell O'Brian  
139 Walnut St.  
Dial 936-9121  
Corning, N.Y.

Packard Company, the manufacturer, and by St. Joseph's Biomedical Department.

The installation caused little disruption to the affected care units. Anthony Mastantuono, director of Biomedical Services director, explained, and utilized some existing equipment to reduce costs.

Stanley Douglas, Community Relations director, stated that the equipment cost between \$80,000 and \$90,000, and was paid for by donations and hospital funds.



Dr. Dominic Romeo, St. Joseph's cardiologist, demonstrating the use of the new heart monitoring equipment in the hospital's Intensive Care Unit. Assisting are nurse Valerie Imburgia and Gerard Mallon, an employee in St. Joseph's Biomedical Services, acting as a patient for the demonstration.

### Gerould's Pharmacies

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