

# JoAnn Keyser: Athlete, Advocate

By Michael Groden

JoAnn Keyser is bright, pretty and works for Eastman Kodak as a word processor in the film emulsion division. She drives to work each day from Hilton using "all the back roads" to avoid the Kodak traffic.

She plans to be married this summer to Richard Armstrong and is busy making plans for the ceremony. She is also easing into the role of mother for her fiance's children.

In her spare time she coaches 13 teenagers, known as the Rochester Rookies, to compete, hopefully, in international track, field and swimming events.

All of the above are fairly normal traits and activities for a resident of the Rochester area. JoAnn prefers it that way. She leads a very normal life, even though she has been confined to a wheelchair all her life.

JoAnn was born with Spina Bifida, a birth defect that affects the spinal cord, usually towards the bottom of the spine.



JOANN KEYSER

Parts of the vertebrae do not develop properly, often causing paralysis below the waist.

The condition occurs even before the child is born, usually in the first few months of pregnancy. There is no known cure at this time.

JoAnn Keyser is probably best known for her athletic accomplishments. In her 10-year competitive career she won more than 50 medals, including olympic golds, in Para Olympic competition for the physically handicapped.

She retired from competition five years ago and turned to coaching handicapped teens who also suffer from Spina Bifida. The Rochester Rookies are currently gearing up for a meet in Hempstead, Long Island. Keyser gives up vacation time to travel with the kids during competition.

She feels that "two or three" athletes are ready for national competition.

Getting ready for a wedding, coaching and keeping communications humming in Building 30 at Kodak Park would keep most people pretty busy, but there's more. Keyser also heads a social group of young people with Spina Bifida.

They meet once a month for concerts, movies, camping or whatever else the kids feel like doing.

Recently Keyser shared a few thoughts on what everyday life is like for someone in a wheelchair.

The major drawback, "still, even in 1981," is the inaccessibility of buildings for people in wheelchairs. A federal law now demands ramps or elevators for all new public buildings, she said. That law does not pertain to buildings already in use, or those in the private sector.

One example that particularly annoys her is not being able to enter doctors offices. Keyser said that she is trying to find a physician's office that she "can take the kids to." She is still looking.

She added that although Kodak has made buildings more accessible for her, there are still many she cannot get into, including the medical offices. She credits Dr. Robert Jones, a Kodak physician for "working hard to not only make accessibility for the handicapped easier, but also to change the attitudes of people at Kodak who work with them."

Eastman Kodak is trying to remedy the situation, Keyser reported. She has taken part in "several surveys of older buildings at Kodak Park," and makes suggestions on how the structures can be modified to allow handicapped persons work in them.

She said that travel can also be a problem.



Keyser at word processor.

The ability to drive a car can give persons in wheelchairs much more mobility than ever before. Area high schools, with the possible exception of Jefferson High School, no longer offer special driver's training programs, Keyser said. A driving course is offered at the Al Sigl Center, she said, but the cost can be prohibitive.

The Rochester Transit system is currently looking into the elimination of lift elevators in its buses that would surely cause further problems for the handicapped. Specially equipped automobiles are expensive, so is proper instruction on the use of the hand controls of the car. Public transportation is the only reasonable alternative.

So the striving for normalcy goes on for JoAnn Keyser and other handicapped people. With advocates like her in the area, the battle may just be won.

## Agencies and Groups Which Help

Following is a list of many human service agencies and organizations which offer service to the disabled person. Agencies and organizations wishing to be included in this list should write to the Courier-Journal News Desk, 114 S. Union St., Rochester, N.Y. 14607.

### Greater Rochester

Association for Retarded Citizens, Inc., James G. Mroczek, executive; 1000 Elmwood Ave., 14602; 442-4100.

Association for the Blind of Rochester, Inc., Bruce Rider, executive; 422 S. Clinton Ave., 14620; 232-1111.

Boy Scouts of America, Otetiana Council, Inc., James O. Case, executive; 474 East Ave., 14607; 244-4210.

City School District of Rochester, Hunter Fraser, executive; 131 W. Broad St., 14608; 325-4560.

Convalescent Hospital for Children Sydney Koret, Ph.D., executive; 2075 Scottsville Rd., 14623; 436-4442.

Crippled Children's Society of Monroe County, Inc., Mrs. Jean Vincent, executive; 55 St. Paul St., 14604; 232-5725.

Delphi Drug Abuse Center, William K. Fulton III, executive; 396 Alexander St., 14607; 244-4940.

DePaul Mental Health Services, Mark H. Fuller, executive; 681 Brown St., 14607; 244-4940.

14611; 436-4840.

East House Corporation, James Sorrentino, executive; 155-A Dartmouth St., 14607; 461-3500.

Genesee Health Services, Ms. Janet Fink, executive; 220 Alexander St., 14607; 263-5650.

Genesee Hospital, Paul W. Hanson, executive; 224 Alexander St., 14607; 263-6000.

Health Association of Rochester and Monroe County, Melvyn R. Diamond, executive; 973 East Ave. 14607; 271-3540.

Hearing and Speech Center of Rochester, Inc., John Paris, executive; 1000 Elmwood Ave. 14620; 442-4100.

Highland Hospital, Michael Weidner, executive; South Avenue at Bellvue, 14620; 473-2200.

Hillside Children's Center, Inc./Northaven, James W. Cotter, executive; 1183 Monroe Ave., 14620; 473-5150.

Mary Cariola Children's Center Inc., Donald E. Burke, executive; 1000 Elmwood Ave., 14620; 442-4100.

Medical Motor Service of Rochester and Monroe County, Mrs. George B. Stephens, executive; 1000 Elmwood Ave. 14620; 442-4100.

Men's Service Center, Rev.

Thomas B. Richards, executive; 353 University Ave., 14607; 325-5339.

Monroe County Department of Mental Health, Andrea M. Pederson, Ph.D., executive; 111 Westfall Rd., 14620; 442-4000.

Monroe Developmental Services, Fred A. McCormack, executive; 620 Westfall Rd., 14620; 461-2800.

Muscular Dystrophy Association, Monroe County, Ms. Michelle Allen, executive; 3159 Winton Rd. S., 14623; 244-5050.

National Foundation — March of Dimes, Miss Patricia Donoghue, executive; 21 North Main St., Pittsford, 14534; 385-1131.

N.Y.S. Office of Vocational Rehabilitation, Paul Pfrommer, executive; 109 South Union St., 14607; 325-5990.

Northeast Health Center, James Hagen, executive; 905 Culver Road, 14609; 482-4300.

Primary Mental Health Project, Emory Cowen, Ph.D., executive; 575 Mt. Hope Ave., 14620; 275-2547.

Rochester Area Multiple Sclerosis, Inc., James P. Ahearn, executive; 1000 Elmwood Ave., 14620; 442-4100.

Rochester Eye and Human Parts Bank, Inc., Mrs. Charlotte Krause, executive; 220 Alexander St., Rm. 609, 14607; 546-5250.

Rochester General Hospital, Arthur E. Liebert, executive; 1425 Portland Ave., 14621; 338-4000.

Rochester Health Network, Kenneth Woodward, M.D., executive; 500 East Ave., 14607; 442-0100.

Rochester Mental Health Center, Inc., William T. Hart, M.D., executive; 1425 Portland Ave., 14621; 544-5220.

Rochester Psychiatric Center, Girish V. Shah, M.D., executive; 1600 South Ave., 14620; 473-3230.

Rochester Rehabilitation Center, Inc., Earl W. Fahy, executive; 1000 Elmwood Ave., 14620; 442-4100.

St. Joseph's Villa, Sister Judith McKay, executive; 3300 Dewey Ave., 14616; 865-1550.

School of the Holy Childhood, Sister Seraphine Herbst, executive; 1150 Buffalo Road, 14624; 328-3750.

Strong Memorial Hospital, Dr. James Bartlett, executive; 260 Crittenden Blvd., 14642; 275-3676.

United Cerebral Palsy Association of the Rochester Area, Inc., Frank Pasenello, executive; 1000 Elmwood Ave., 14620; 442-4100.

Western Monroe Mental Health Center, Ms. Beth Friauf, executive; 2633 Ridge Road West, 14626; 225-3210.

Westside Health Services, Lester Holcomb, executive; 30 Millbank St., 14619; 436-3040.

### Southern Tier

Association for Retarded Children, 207 Madison Ave., Elmira; 734-6151.

United Cerebral Palsy, 318 Madison Ave., Elmira; 734-2081.

CIDS, 318 Madison Ave., Elmira; 733-6533.

Southern Tier Association for the Blind, 719 Lake St., Elmira; 734-1554.

Twin Tiers Rehabilitation Center, St. Joseph's Hospital, 555 Market St., Elmira; 734-1538.

Physically Handicapped Children's Program, Elmira; 737-2028.

Capabilities, Inc., 119 Sullivan St., Elmira; 734-2006.

Association Benefiting Special People, 32 Fulton St., Owego; 687-3691.

Southern Tier Association for the Blind, 122 Liberty St., Bath; 776-6655.

Association for the Retarded of Steuben County, 7 Gansvort St., Bath; 776-2244.

Bath Center for the Brain Injured, 24 Pine St., Bath; 776-9384.

Greenhouse Center for Developmental Study, 289 Denison Pkwy. East, Corning; 962-2474.

Association for Retarded Children, Pine at First, Corning; 962-4150.

Steuben County Physically Handicapped Children's Program, CIDS, Infirmary Building, Bath; 776-7651.

Assistance for the Disabled, 158 Chemung St., Corning;

962-8225

TNT Transportation Now Together, 158 Chemung St., Corning; 962-8225.

Coalition for Handicapped Young Adults, Corning; 937-5218.

Association for Retarded Children Training Center, 373 Canisteo St., Hornell; 324-0640.

Advocates for the Handicapped, 1701 N. Cayuga St., Ithaca; 772-2101.

Human Services Coalition, 313 N. Aurora St., Ithaca; 273-8685.

Mental Health Association, 313 N. Aurora St., Ithaca; 273-9200.

Special Children's Center, 1287 Trumansburg Road, Ithaca; 772-5891.

Association for Retarded Children, 102 W. State St., Ithaca; 277-4575.

Challenge Industries, 402 E. State St., Ithaca; 272-8990.

Information and Referral Services, Ithaca; 272-9331.

Counseling Services for the Visually Impaired, Bruce Watkins, executive, Ithaca; 273-7272.

Services for the Blind, Gertrude Shephard, contact, Ithaca; 257-7823.

Ewing Speech and Hearing Clinic, Ithaca College, Ithaca; 274-3248.

Learning Disabilities' Association of Tompkins County, Ithaca; 272-9331.



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## Support Programs for the Disabled

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