

COURIER-JOURNAL

SOUTHERN TIER-AUBURN GENEVA

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Puppets Teach Children about Handicaps

By Martin Toombs
 Southern Tier Editor

Wayland — Have you ever wondered what it's like to be deaf? or how retarded people feel when they are treated badly? or how blind people match their clothing?

Some pupils at St. Joseph's School got an opportunity to ask those questions and others of persons with disabilities at their school recently.

And while their visitors were actually puppets displaying various handicaps, the pupils soon were ad-

ressing their questions directly to them.

They first met Renaldo, who is blind. He told them how he eats without being able to see his food, how he matches his clothing, and about Braille.

The St. Joseph's pupils wanted to know if Renaldo's friends treated him differently, and addressed their questions to Laura Tapper, who with Sheila Cascini, were the puppeteers.

"Renaldo" explained that his good friends don't treat him any differently, and while he thinks it would be

"pretty neat" to be able to see, he gets along just fine.

The pupils next met "Ellen Jane," who is retarded, and works for a veterinarian. She showed them what happened the first time she met a customer at the animal hospital who didn't want a "retarded" person handling her dog.

Ellen Jane said that while she used to cry when people treated her badly like that, her mother has told her that she shouldn't let it bother her.

The impact of the puppet show then became evident; the pupils addressed their questions directly to Ellen Jane, ignoring the puppeteers. They asked if she wishes she weren't retarded, and also about her family and her work with the animals.

They then met Mark, confined to a wheelchair with cerebral palsy; Mandy, who is deaf, and a girl who has a learning disability. The pupils continued to address questions to the puppets, even asking one for her birthdate, and another for advice with a personal problem.

Ms. Tapper said afterwards that their reaction to the puppets was typical, strengthening the learning which takes place. She said that at times the children have surprised her with how fully they have accepted the puppets as real people.

The show's success in increasing the acceptance of persons with disabilities may have been demonstrated in the concern the pupils expressed over the way the handicapped were treated by their friends. Knowing the ability of children to be cruel, they were concerned



Renaldo, left, who is blind, shows how he can read using braille to a sighted friend. The puppeteers are Laura Tapper and Sheila Cascini.

about the treatment of their "new friends."

Following the program, Ms. Tapper gave the teachers materials they can use for follow-up while Ms. Cascini taught the children some sign language.

Called the "Kids Project Puppet Show" by its sponsors, the Hornell Office of Mental Health, Retardation and Developmental Disabilities (OMRDD), the program is taken from the "Kids on the Block" program, which is copyrighted. Ms. Tapper explained that she and Ms. Cascini are one of three volunteer sets of presentors. The program is available in the Hornell office's service area, Chemung, Livingston, Schuyler, Steuben and Wyoming counties.

OMRDD bought the first set of puppets, she said; they are now looking for

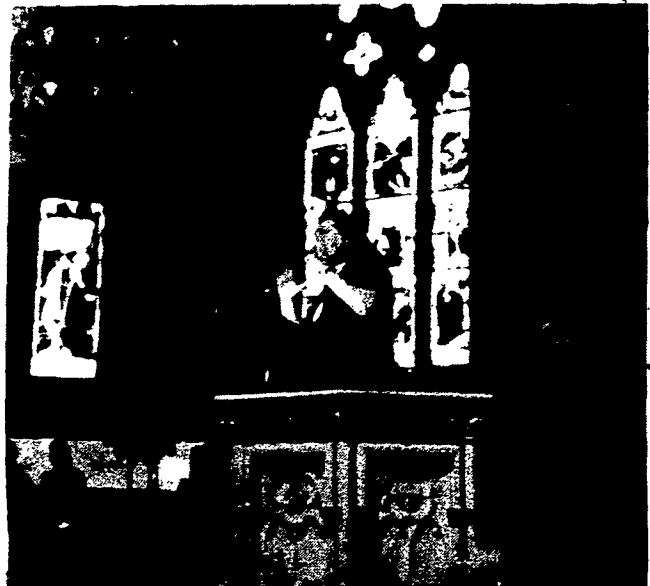


Mark, in the wheelchair, meets a new neighbor and explains about his cerebral palsy.

donations to buy a second set to increase the number of presentations they can make.

Ms. Tapper said that the

puppet show is an educational effort of the office aimed at children. The office also has programs designed for adults.



Sister Mary Jose Hobday speaking at Cornell's Sage Chapel.

Sister Jose Hobday Speaks at Cornell

By Martin Toombs
 Southern Tier Editor

Ithaca — Participants in the Catholic Masses and the Sage Chapel Interreligious Service at Cornell University on Palm Sunday got advice on improving their spiritual lives from Sister Mary Jose, Hobday, a Franciscan sister of Indian descent.

She gave four talks that day, at two Masses, the Sage service, and at an evening program which brought back about 50 who had heard her earlier in the day.

Sister Jose was born in Texas of Seneca and Iroquois descent. She currently works in the Tucson diocese, where she directs prayer workshops and promotes spirituality. She holds a degree from Notre Dame University, and has done graduate work in several fields. She has worked on the Ft. Peck Indian Reservation on the Sonora Desert of southwest Arizona, and has published articles including "Seeking a Moist Heart: Native American Ways for Helping the Spirit," and "Speaking of My Life."

At the Sage Chapel service, she urged her listeners to make time for their spiritual lives. She said that a person "can't be a man or woman of Christ without making room for the seed" of His word, noting that a seed

"has to have enough space" to grow.

"The seed is the word of God," she said, and people must work to be fertile places for that seed. Some are so fertile, she said, that they can "make negatives come out positive."

Holy Week is a good time for people to look at the "ground of our being," she said.

She advised her audience to give evidence of their faith; to fast, not necessarily from food, but to "make space" in their lives; and to pray.

In that evening's talk at Anabel Taylor Hall, she addressed a variety of factors involved in a person's spiritual life, and emphasized the value of the use of the Gospel in a person's life.

She also spoke about creative lifestyles, noting the value of a simpler approach to life. She reported on three characteristics of such lifestyles which were seen as central by a conference in Winnipeg, Canada, in which she participated. They were an involvement with the land; a reduction in consumer involvement, a "lifestyle that demonstrates we can leave it," and a spiritual path, be it yoga or Christianity, which is a commitment to "an in-depth effort to grow spiritually."

Class Offered To Nurses

Big Flats — A day-long program to further acquaint Southern Tier nurses with their role in caring for patients with congestive heart failure will be offered beginning at 8:30 a.m., Wednesday, May 13, at the Goff Road School.

The program is sponsored by the Nurse Education Committee of the Southern Tier New York Chapter of the American Heart Association.

Speakers will be Kathleen Craig-Kuhn of Bath, who will discuss assessment, nursing diagnosis, intervention, evaluation and the hospitalized patient; Edith Reidy, a St. Joseph's Hospital instructor, who will discuss hospital and home setting; and Shirley Tiffany of the Tioga County Public Health Nursing Service who will talk on the needs of the patient in the home setting.

Further information may be obtained by contacting the Heart Association Office in Elmira at 734-2939.

Coalition Begins Lobbying

By Martin Toombs
 Southern Tier Editor

Elmira — The Coalition for Equity in the Federal Budget, formed under the sponsorship of the Southern Tier Office of Social Ministry (STOSM), has now met twice and begun its lobbying efforts with federal representatives from the area.

The group of about 20 members is being chaired by Father Neil Miller, STOSM director. It organized on April 14, following a public meeting April 8.

The coalition has formed three committees, which are separately pursuing lobbying efforts, collecting information on the local impact of the

proposed federal budget cuts, and efforts to work with other groups on the issues.

Father Miller reported that the group planned to make presentations to Stanley Lundine, representative from the 39th Congressional district, and Sen. Alfonse D'Amata on their trips to Elmira last weekend. The group also is planning programming to be shown on a local television station.

The group is expressing its concern over the drastic budget cuts being proposed, Father Miller said, especially those in human services which are "placing more of a burden on the poor and middle class."

At its organizational

meeting, the group established three priorities: to insure the preservation of programs which provide for basic needs, such as food and shelter; to oppose cuts to programs which provide people with skills; and to support the maintenance of agencies which help people who are below the poverty level, such as Legal Services.

The group plans to continue meeting weekly. Father Miller noted that the coalition feels pressure from the scheduled May 15 start for the first voting on President Reagan's budget proposals.

Hospital Sets Memorial Rite

Elmira — A memorial service will be held at 7 p.m. Wednesday, May 13 in Dunn Chapel of St. Joseph's Hospital.

The pastoral care department of the hospital plans the

worship service every two months for all those persons who have died at St. Joseph during that period. All families of the deceased are invited to the service and to a social gathering following the Mass.

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