

Rainbows at St. John's Commemorate a Child's Courage

By Teresa A. Parsons

Most of all, her classmates and teachers speak of the joy Tiffany MacEachern showed in challenging life.

So since the eight-year-old daughter of Tom and Dorothy MacEachern of Greece died last month of cystic fibrosis, her friends at St. John the Evangelist School have remembered her with rainbows on every door in the building.

Third-grade teacher Gloria Entress remembers praying during Tiffany's funeral service for something to do in class afterward that would help the children share their emotions. She heard the song "Over the Rainbow" and remembering how Tiffany loved that traditional symbol of hope, she knew what to do.

"It helped to be doing something easy and familiar," Entress recalled of handing out construction paper and scissors and putting her class to work making the rainbows, then running around the school to hang them up. "Meanwhile, I tried to tell them that it was OK to be angry or sad, but that whatever they felt should be shared."

In fact, Entress had a taste of her own advice when one boy caught her wiping a tear from her eye. "He said 'Mrs. Entress, it's OK to cry,'" she recalled with a laugh.

Although the rainbows remind students and staff at St. John's how much they miss Tiffany, they also recall what a rich experience they gained in knowing her.

Many schools are unwilling to keep a child with the degree of disability Tiffany had, particularly during the past year. And even her doctors thought that coming to school this year might be too much of a strain for her.

But St. John's school nurse Gloria Storey, seemed to exemplify the attitude of the school in saying she never felt that Tiffany's illness made her too much to handle.

"She was never any trouble," recalls



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Mrs. Grace Entress' third grade class at St. John the Evangelist, Greece.

Storey, who administered Tiffany's medication every day before lunch and often kept her company when her class was outside at recess. "The most she ever asked for was that I put applesauce on her pills to help her take them. I'd ask her how she felt, and she's always say 'good' even when I knew she couldn't feel that great."

"It meant so much to Tiffany to have that chance to relate and the friendship of the other children," Entress added. "I told the children 'that's why she really came to school — she was an A student, but she came most of all because she needed you.'"

In responding to Tiffany's needs, Entress believes her class was able to find meaning

for the Christian ideals she tries to teach. Often, with a concept the children didn't seem to grasp, using Tiffany as a example makes the difference.

"To tell third graders they should love one another as Jesus loves them is not always an idea they grasp," Entress said. "But, for example, when I tell them to love each other like we love Tiff, they know exactly what I mean. There was more love in my classroom this year than I've ever seen."

Entress said that when Tiffany began to need a portable oxygen pack with her this year, she was upset at the prospect of being different.

The teacher responded by gathering the

class and discussing Tiffany's feelings with them. She told them it was no big deal to see people carrying portable stereos and tape players around, so if Tiffany had a "box" it shouldn't cause a fuss. The oxygen pack appeared without further mention and soon it became a point of honor for boys in the class to take turns carrying it.

Ironically, none of Tiffany's needs while she attended St. John's were as difficult for her class and for the school as a whole to deal with as was her loss.

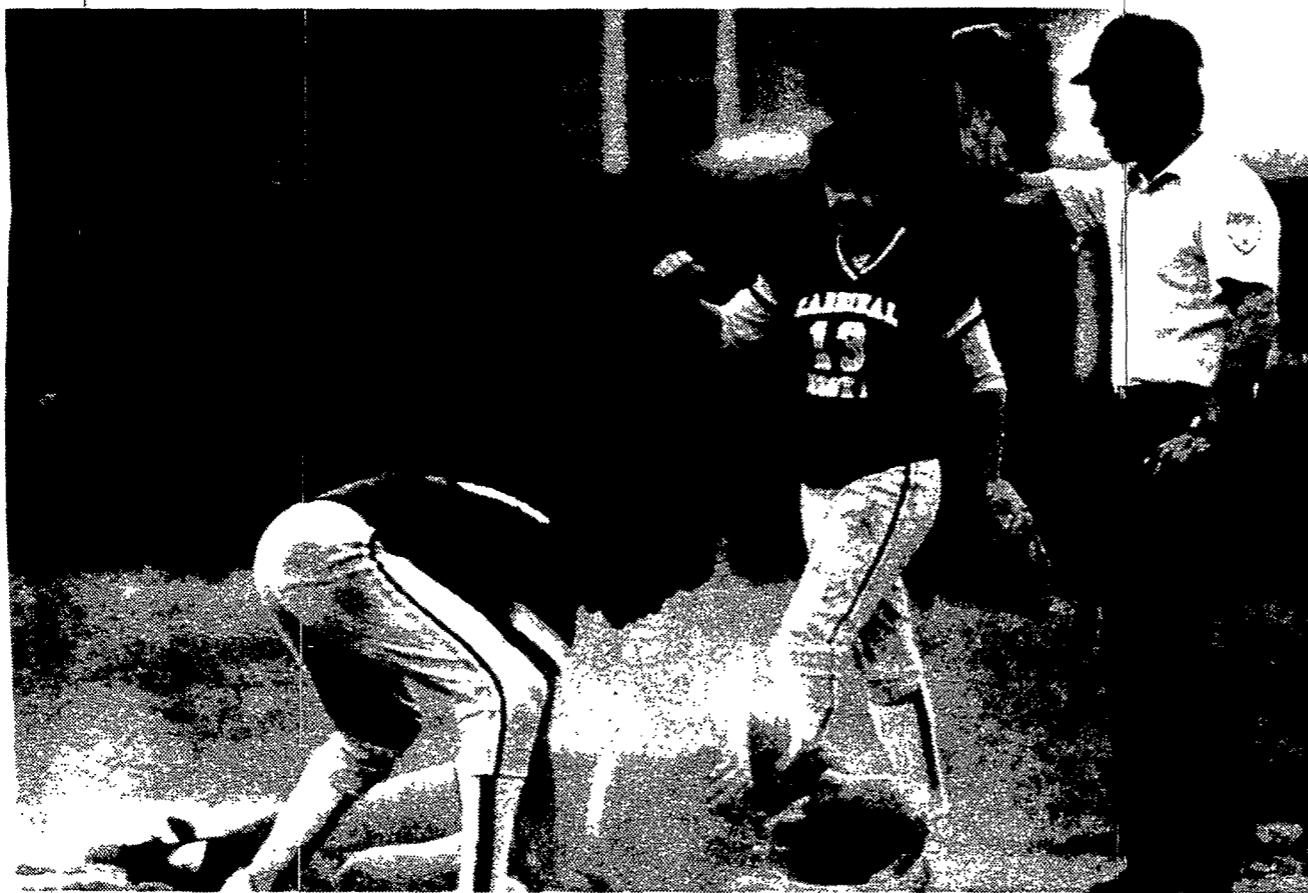
More than half of her class attended her funeral service with their parents, while other parents staffed the school so faculty members could attend. Father Joe Larrabee, the funeral Mass celebrant, recalls that Tiffany's classmates were visibly upset.

After the Mass, he brought them up around the altar and continued a discussion begun a few days before about their personal views of heaven, a place where it's always daytime, where animals live but don't hurt each other, and where all the famous and wonderful people who ever lived are. Father Larrabee remembers that what really got the children talking was speculating on who would greet Tiffany at the gates of heaven and bring her to Jesus.

"You know it's going to hurt them for a while," he said, "but they learned from her challenging life experience and by being able to talk about her death." Too often, he added, parents and teachers — out of their own fear — fail to address death as a life issue and thereby transmit their fears to their children.

"If we believe in resurrection," Father Larrabee told the children, "we believe that Tiffany will be with us wherever we are ... that now when we pray every day, we can talk to her."

And they do. Each day during the morning prayer, Mrs. Entress' class recites a litany to the saints, which ends with "St. Tiffany, pray for us."



Jeff Goulding/Courier-Journal

Buffy Hodgetts from BK gets tagged out by Mooney's Lori Padulo after Hodgetts tried to steal second base

It's the first time in five years that Cardinal Mooney's women's varsity softball team has beaten Bishop Kearney. Mooney Coach Joette Abbey, said that it was a "sweet victory" after the final run was scored to bring the score to 5-2. Abbey also commented that they were not hitting the ball as they were in the beginning of the season, but attributed this to the number of games they have played and that the other league teams' pitching is getting better as the season draws closer to the play-offs. With Mooney's

record at 14-2, the sectionals are imminent but, "We take it a game at a time," said Abbey.

Linda D'Onofrio, coach of Bishop Kearney's women's varsity softball team said, "We played well despite the loss. They have been together a little longer than us which makes for a stronger team. They are a good contender for the sectionals, and we'll be pulling for them." The next game between the two teams is Wednesday, May 22, where they may even the score.

Sweet Victory For Cardinal Mooney



Infielder Laurie Lupo, reaches for a throw to first base from a hit to center field to get a Mooney runner out.

Bowling Tournament Set for Handicapped

Fourth Degree members of the Knights of Columbus throughout the diocese will sponsor a bowling tournament for the physically disabled and wheelchair-confined Saturday, June 8 at Maiden Lanes, 600 Maiden Lane, it has been announced by Jack Kelly, faithful navigator of Bishop James E. Kearney Assembly.

Co-chairmen will be Robert Hafner and Jerry Newman, both of Webster.

Each of the district's 12 assemblies will participate under the direction of Raymond P. Pfeifer, master of the Fourth Degree, Fifth New York District. The tourney will be open to men and women, 18 and older and

will be divided into three parts — A, the Standing Division for those capable of rolling the ball independently; B, the Wheelchair Division for those who roll the ball from a sitting position, and C, the Wheelchair-Ramp Division, for those who require a special ramp to roll the ball. Three frames will be rolled

by each participant and trophies and cash prizes will be presented winners in each division. Rolloff times will be 10 a.m., 12:30 p.m. and 3 p.m. Applications may be obtained from the Kearney Assembly Bowling Committee representative Newman, 265-3883 or 872-6090.