

God gives each of us a special gift

by Liz Plaehn
Resource Room Teacher
Trinity Lutheran School, Utica, Mich.

God has blessed all of us with special gifts. Some of us received a beautiful singing voice, others have the gift of making friends, and still others received the gift of above average intelligence.

Scott Sepke was blessed with the gift of understanding concepts at a deeper level and faster rate than his peers.

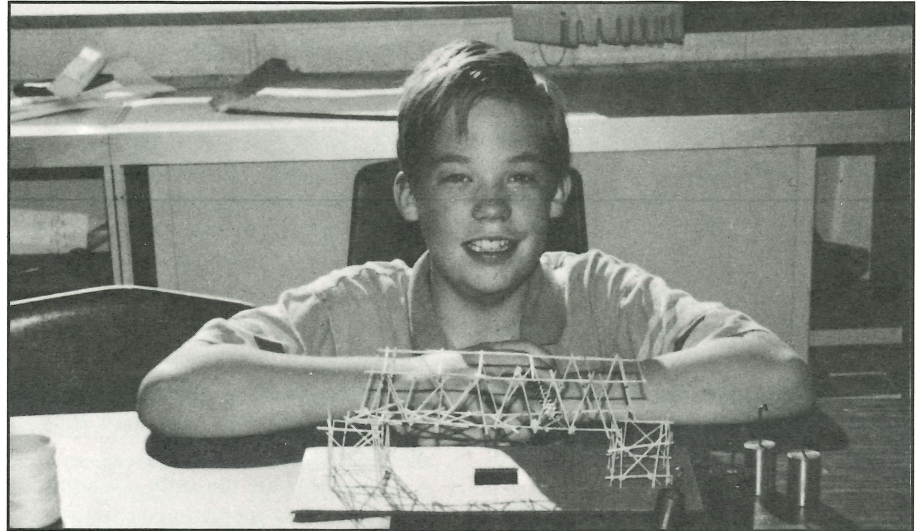
Scott is a sixth grader at Trinity in Utica, Mich. He has participated in the resource room—formerly the gifted room—for more than four years.

Before Scott was placed in the program, he was becoming frustrated with school. *"In first grade I didn't have time to get my own work finished because I always had a line of students at my desk asking me questions about their work—mostly how to pronounce words. The work was repetitive and easy,"* Scott said.

For Scott, the resource room became a place where he could develop his higher thinking skills along with learning how

"We have different gifts, according to the grace given us . . ."
(Rom. 12:6).

to deal with the gift of above average intelligence. He said, *"The program has helped me socially mix with younger and older students. I have enjoyed learning*



Scott Sepke used his abilities to budget and design to build a toothpick bridge that can hold 700 grams of weight.

about new people, places and things through research. The most important area I have developed is my organizational skills."

When Scott first came to the resource room, he had a difficult time getting things organized. He could not keep his desk clean or organize his thoughts on paper. His handwriting was difficult to understand, and he stayed away from anything dealing with being organized. But after a few years, Scott developed skills that will help him the rest of his life.

Just like an athlete needs a coach to help in skill development, Scott needed guidance to help him understand his abilities and to learn how to use them appropriately. The resource room at Trinity was just what Scott needed.

Joalene Sepke, Scott's mother, said, *"The program has been a joyful experience and blossoming experience for Scott. He has been able to assimilate back into the regular classroom with ease. Scott has developed organizational skills and is able to contribute his ideas and thoughts to the rest of his class with*

confidence. He has learned higher thinking skills for a lifetime as well as coping skills to deal with the frustration 'gifted' students often feel."

Two new videos are now available for your use

Lutheran Special Education Ministries is proud to announce that two new videos have been produced for use by congregations and small groups.

- The first, ". . . But Now I Know I'm Not," is 20 minutes long. It can be used with adult and young adult audiences for Bible class, PTL and general congregational awareness of our ministry.

- The second video, "God Made Us All," is nine minutes long. This video, directed toward children's ministries, is good for Sunday schools and elementary schools.

If you would like to use these videos or would like more information about our ministry, please call the Development Office at (313) 368-1220.

Shaping and pruning for the Lord's work

by Kristin Kolb Rathje

Last August, when I drove onto the Lutheran Special Education Ministries campus in my Dodge Colt—which was bulging with my belongings—I was very excited about my new vocation. The Lord had called me to teach special children. What a joy I was about to experience! (Please hold the jokes about how naive first-year teachers are.)

Francis, a former deaf student of the school, greeted me at the door. He signed to me, reminding me how elementary my understanding of sign language was. I struggled to sign “new teacher” and “my name is K-R-I-S-T-I-N.” I smiled and nodded a lot at his rapid, theatrical signing. Francis and I have improved my signing over the past eight months.

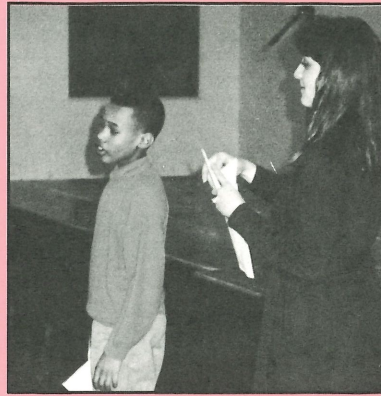
A very good friend of mine often jokes about how she can feel God “pruning” her life, like a vinedresser would prune his vineyard in order to increase production. “Pruning” is a painful process, but in the end proves beneficial to production.

Consider the bonsai tree—those tiny little trees that are artfully clipped, bound and shaped to create ornamental foliage. Before clipping, these little bushes are beautiful, as created by God. But after the reforming of their shapes, they are works of art.

Lately, I've felt like a bonsai tree—being clipped and shaped. But, God has bigger plans for me. He needs more than an idealistic optimist. He needs a person crafted by His hands to do His work—to achieve His purposes here on earth and here in my little classroom at Lutheran Special Education Ministries.

For this reason, I have felt my life clipped, bound and shaped through this year of adventure. Yet, through this reformation, I have become more useful in God's sight.

This same analogy can be applied to my students. My students are bright, full of God's love and fun to be with.



Kristin Kolb Rathje is pictured here with one of her students.

They are beautiful creations of God. He loves them just as they are—learning disabilities and all. But these students are often frustrated.

One day, my students will realize that they are being “pruned” and shaped by a loving Father, who wants to make them handcrafted works of art for the whole world to see. They don't see that now. Right now they see their struggles.

And these are not only academic struggles, they are personal struggles as well. I have students who have flunked classes, who have been called “stupid” and “dumb” more times than they care to count. I have students who live with one parent, who have lost their parents, who don't feel loved. They don't feel themselves as being prepared for something bigger and better. They see themselves as just treading water, trying not to drown in frustration.

However, all is not bleak. Some bonsais are emerging! When I am at wits end and feel like there is no way a student will understand what an adverb is or why $1/2$ is the same as $4/8$, I pray, “Lord, help me to help these students understand.” Time and again, when I have prayed and left it in God's hands, a student has looked at me excitedly and said, “Miss Kolb, I understand!” A beautiful bonsai, indeed.

Kristin, a 1989 graduate of Concordia College—Ann Arbor, taught her first year at North Detroit Lutheran. She now is a resource room teacher at Lutheran High North and at Lutheran High Northwest. Kristin and John Rathje married in July 1990.

Special help for special children

- A pastor from Mount Clemens, Mich., wants to know about confirmation materials for some students with learning disabilities.

- A parent from Lansing, Mich., is concerned about Sunday school materials for her hearing impaired daughter.

- A preschool teacher from Arkansas seeks a way to help a hearing impaired child receive a Christian education in her classroom.

- A principal from Ohio needs Sunday school materials for mentally impaired individuals.

Many children in Lutheran congregations are learning disabled, hearing impaired or developmentally impaired. These children receive special education services through the public school. However, they receive their religious education through the church. Meeting the needs of these special children is not always possible with the usual methods and materials.

The question: Where can people in the congregation go to for help when they want to provide a Christian education for children with special learning needs?

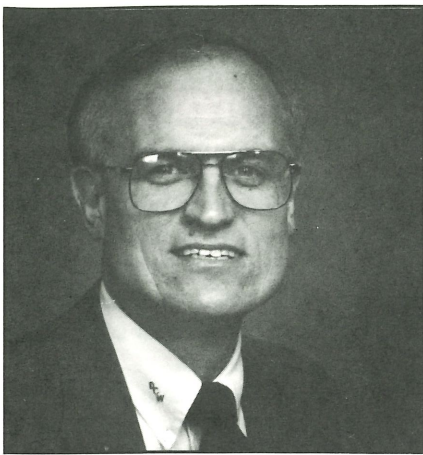
The answer: Contact the curriculum consultant at the Ephphatha Center of Lutheran Special Education Ministries, 6861 E. Nevada, Detroit, MI 48234; (313) 368-1220.

Would you like to be our Aaron?

Just as Moses had his brother, Aaron, as his spokesman, I would like to ask you to be our spokesman in your congregation.

Lutheran Special Education Ministries needs you to help provide your congregation with information about our programs to help children with special learning needs learn about God's love. We will give you information to share.

If you are interested in being part of our Aaron program, please send your name, address, congregation and telephone number to Executive Director Roger DeMeyere, Lutheran Special Education Ministries, 6861 E. Nevada, Detroit, MI 48234.



Rev. Dean Wachholz
Assistant Director of Development
Lutheran Special Education Ministries

Rev. Wachholz comes to Detroit

Pastor Dean C. Wachholz accepted the call to serve as Assistant Director of Development at Lutheran Special Education Ministries of Detroit. He'll spend most of his time working with churches and individuals to promote our ministry.

Pastor Wachholz is from Milwaukee. He graduated from Concordia Theological Seminary, Springfield, Ill., in 1972. He served parishes in Tonasket, Wash.; Mason City, Ill.; and for the last 13 years at Immanuel Lutheran Church, Broadlands, Ill. Pastor Dean, wife Betty, and son Chad will live in Redford, Mich.

Roger DeMeyere, Executive Director of Lutheran Special Education Ministries, expressed these thoughts about Pastor Wachholz: "Many people haven't heard about Lutheran Special Education Ministries, and, for those who are more familiar, they don't really understand the scope of this ministry.

"I view Reverend Wachholz's primary responsibility as spreading the good news about our ministry in order to make the public more aware that Christian education is available for children with special learning needs.

"We welcome Reverend Wachholz and his family as partners in ministry and ask for God's blessing on his work."

Dates to remember:

- Volunteer Day April 23
- Annual Meeting May 8
- Graduation Day June 11

Yes, they do succeed!

by Andy Bailey
Resource Room Teacher
Lutheran High School East
Harper Woods, Mich.

The greatest success stories at Lutheran High East are the students who received a Christian high school education when they otherwise could not. These students have a wide array of talents and skills that blossom in a Christian environment because of the assistance they receive here.

Though the students are hampered by disabilities in reading, math, comprehension skills, long- or short-term memory, or in other areas, or have physical disabilities like deafness or cerebral palsy, they have great potential as individuals serving in God's kingdom. They are developing into productive, motivated citizens.

One student, James, is a senior this year. He's received services from Lutheran Special Education Ministries for several years. At Lutheran High East, he has excelled in football and track and has won numerous state and local awards and recognition in both.

This fall, he was the homecoming king. With the training he received here,

he'll be able to attend college next fall. Several students from our program have gone to college. Although they often still need some special assistance, they have the opportunity to succeed and enter a wide variety of careers. They can pursue their goals because of the training and assistance they received in the resource room at Lutheran High East. These students have numerous skills, abilities and potential.

Some, including Chris, Karl and Sara, even made the honor roll and succeeded in courses like chemistry, advanced biology, Christian doctrine, comparative religion and physiology.

This year, 10 percent of Lutheran High East's students receive at least one hour of service from either Andrew Bailey or John Morrison, the Lutheran Special Education Ministries personnel at the high school. The students practice study skills; improve their abilities in reading, writing, math and English; learn about geography, history and political affairs; and mature in social skills.

But, most importantly, they have the opportunity to succeed in a Christian educational environment. And succeed they do!

It's a brand new year!

It's 1991 . . . and **you** can make a child feel **very special!** God can use you to be an important link in the life of a child at Lutheran Special Education Ministries. Think about what this poem says to you . . . and how **you** might respond:

One hundred years from now,
it will not matter what kind of car I drove,
what kind of house I lived in,
how much I had in my bank account,
nor what my clothes looked like.
But the world may be a little better
because I was important in
the life of a child.

- I would like to include Lutheran Special Education Ministries in my Will. Please contact me. My phone number is _____.
- I would like to make a donation to Lutheran Special Education Ministries. Enclosed is my check for \$ _____.
- I know someone who might be interested in supporting your work. Please have your representative contact:
Name: _____
Address: _____
City, State, ZIP: _____
Phone: _____

Lutheran Special Education Ministries
6861 E. Nevada
Detroit, MI 48234
(313) 368-1220

Ephphatha Award nominations now being accepted

The Board of Directors of Lutheran Special Education Ministries established the Ephphatha Award to recognize the many dedicated people throughout The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod who have given time and talent to enable children with special learning needs to receive a Christian education.

The award is presented annually to an individual who has made outstanding contributions to the Christian education of special needs children in his or her congregation, community or the church at large.

Lutheran Special Education Ministries is committed to opening the doors of Christian education to all children. This commitment is reflected in our Statement of Ministry:

*"With the knowledge of God's love and the desire that
God's love be revealed through our ministry,
Lutheran Special Education Ministries serves to
enable children with special learning needs to receive
a Christian education."*

To accomplish this, Lutheran Special Education Ministries has a continuum of special education programs and services, including a special education day school, resource rooms in Lutheran schools in Michigan and Illinois, and evaluation and consultation services. Plans are underway to expand these services to New York and other states. To God alone be the glory.

Lutheran Special Education Ministries wants to acknowledge the time and talents of individuals who are also committed to ministry to special needs children by presenting the Ephphatha Award. It is our prayer that others will then be moved to work on behalf of these special children.

Nominations accompanied by a record of service should be made by March 30, 1991, and directed to:

**Mr. Roger DeMeyere, Executive Director
Lutheran Special Education Ministries
6861 E. Nevada
Detroit, MI 48234**

Campbell's Labels For Education Program underway

Lutheran Special Education Ministries is participating in the Campbell's Labels For Education Program. When you turn in the labels from these products, we'll redeem them for educational equipment and material.

Please send all labels to 6861 E. Nevada, Detroit, MI 48234.

Save the front labels from these products:

- Campbell's Condensed Soups (red and white label)
- Campbell's Chunky Soups
- Campbell's "Soup for One" Soups
- Campbell's Low Sodium Soups
- Campbell's Gold Label Soups
- Campbell's Home Cookin' Soups
- Campbell's Special Request Soups
- Campbell's Beans Products
- Campbell's Tomato Juice
- "V8" Vegetable Juice
- Franco-American products
- Swanson canned food products
- Prego spaghetti sauces
- Campbell's Fresh Products

Also save these items:

- Marie's Salad Dressing (save the safety seals)
- Vlasic Pickles (save the lids)
- Swanson Frozen Food packages (save the proof of purchase)
- Pepperidge Farm products (save the proof of purchase)
- Campbell's Quality Soup and Recipe Mix (save the bottom flap UPC panel)

The Advocate

for Students with Special Learning Needs

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