

The Advocate

for Students with Special Learning Needs

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'From one seed...' a special resource for everyone

by Karen Eggemeyer

What would you do if you found out your toddler was developmentally disabled? Autistic? Deaf? Learning disabled? Had Down's Syndrome?

If you're like most parents—me included—I'd search out any way possible to help my child, to help him or her learn as much as possible and live life to its fullest.

When Pastor Fred Anson and his wife found out their 15-month-old son Matthew was developmentally disabled and had autistic-like tendencies, they felt the same way.

Since developmentally disabled children can't learn the same way other children do, when Matthew was 3 he began attending special schools near the Anson home in St. Louis, where Pastor Anson was attending Concordia Seminary. But his parents wanted more for him.

"I wanted to see Matthew involved as much as possible in the life of the church," his father said. Today Matthew, 16, serves as an acolyte in the church where his father serves as the associate pastor.

"Every time Matthew comes to the communion rail, he receives a blessing," his father said. But he wanted Matthew to be able to actually *participate* in the Lord's Supper—not to have Matthew come to the communion rail as simply a gesture, but to see that Matthew could truly understand and appreciate the Lord's Supper.



Shirley Danz,
right, helps
parent Lisa
Boss.

Besides the benefit to Matthew, Pastor Anson also wanted the congregation to see that God loves *all* people—no matter what their ability or disability.

Pastor Anson tried teaching his son himself, but it didn't work out. "I was too close," he commented, "being both parent and pastor." But there was no way Matthew could attend regular confirmation classes.

After seeing a publication titled "Communion for Christians Who Are Mentally Retarded," Matthew's father knew what to do. Luckily, his first parish had been a deaf congregation, so he knew about the work of Lutheran Special Education Ministries.

He contacted the Detroit office, asking what resources were available to help his son become confirmed. Instructional Consultant Shirley Danz sent him a packet of resources.

As a result of this inquiry and the help provided by Lutheran Special Education Ministries, today one of Pastor Anson's parishioners, a teacher, is preparing a special confirmation course for Matthew. With God's help, Matthew will have the opportunity to learn about and come to truly understand and appreciate the Lord's Supper.

Shirley Danz knows about the struggle families have when a child is learning disabled. Her brother had a hard time in confirmation classes. Everyone thought he just wasn't trying, or that he was just plain stupid. But Shirley and her family knew better. He didn't find out until he was over 50 that he had a learning disability. No one had known.

"Everything I know now could have helped my brother. I would like to see more and more people get the message at a level they can understand," Shirley said.

That's why, when Lutheran Special Education Ministries gets a letter or a call from a pastor, teacher or parent anywhere in the United States or Canada, a consultant does everything possible to help.

A small beginning

When this resource service began, Lutheran Special Education Ministries got only a few letters and calls each year asking for help finding a confirmation course for a learning disabled child, for help with a learning disabled or deaf child in the congregation, how to teach Sunday school to a Down's

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Syndrome child, and help for similar problems.

As part of their workday at Lutheran Special Education Ministries, instructional consultants respond to those inquiries. Shirley Danz enjoys answering inquiries and helping people. After all, she has taught school for 23 years in a regular classroom and has taught religion classes since she was 15.

As more people discovered that Lutheran Special Education Ministries was willing to help and had the resource people available to answer their cries for help, the demand for this special service expanded. Today, the ministry is contacted more than 100 times each year.

You would expect some kind of a charge for this service. After all, Shirley and the other consultants, through Lutheran Special Education Ministries, spend a lot of time researching, reading and contacting publishing companies, authors, teachers, and other sources to keep abreast on all new developments in education. "I definitely make sure to read about every breakthrough that comes along," Shirley added.

But, "No, there's no charge," Shirley says. "It's all part of our mission at Lutheran Special Education Ministries."

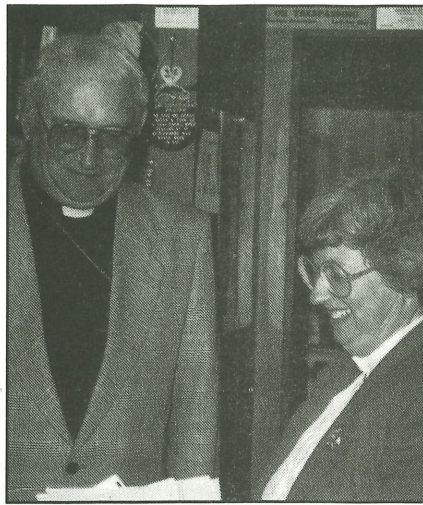
Cries for help

About 85 percent of the inquiries sent to the ministry are concerning religious materials, confirmation, Sunday school, midweek school, preschool children with learning problems or parenting roles. Each inquiry is answered individually, and a list of resources with information about specific materials that can help the individual child is included. Also included is appropriate information for obtaining recommended materials.

Can Lutheran Special Education Ministries answer every question, solve every problem?

No, they can't. But "if I don't know the answer, I will try to find someone who does," Shirley said, speaking for the entire staff at Lutheran Special Education Ministries.

Although it may take some time to research and answer a particular letter,



Shirley Danz helps Pastor Ralph Unger of St. Paul in Farmington Hills, Mich.

"I don't ignore any question. I don't want anyone to go away unanswered in some way," she said.

Shirley, like everyone at Lutheran Special Education Ministries, wants "to serve as a resource not only to people in our Lutheran Special Education Ministries program, but to people all over the United States where they don't even have programs."

Special workshops

Working with Linda Sires, who heads the National Christian Resource Center at Bethesda Lutheran Home in Watertown, Wis., Shirley and Kathy Krause have presented workshops on identifying learning disabilities and methods and materials for people with special learning needs.

The workshops, which can be presented to pastors and teachers, but more often to concern laypeople, include information on sources for confirmation, Sunday school materials and other aids.

Bethesda Lutheran Home works primarily with people with mental retardation, as compared to Lutheran Special Education Ministries, which deals primarily with educational and

classroom work with children with special learning needs.

If someone inquires about special religious education "for children and adults with learning disabilities, such as dyslexia or attention deficit disorder... [the Lutheran Special Education Ministries] staff have the expertise" in these

areas, commented Linda Sires.

If Linda receives an inquiry about these areas, she refers them to Lutheran Special Education Ministries. Likewise, when Shirley or another consultant gets a question about a child or adult with mental retardation, she refers them to Linda Sires.

The staff at Lutheran Special Education Ministries is available to present workshops for groups such as congregations, districts, or any other group. However, the requesting group is asked to pay for all travel expenses and the cost of duplicating all handouts.

A resource for everyone

Do a lot of people know this kind of resource help is available? That there is someone to turn to for help?

Pastor Anson doesn't think a lot of people really know about the work at Lutheran Special Education Ministries, or about Shirley's work, which he calls "excellent."

"Unless there's a specific need . . . unless there's somebody in the congregation, a child, an adult, an aunt, an uncle who needs this service, not many people are aware it exists." He strongly believes that the word should get out about the work Lutheran Special Education Ministries provides.

A word about the staff

Shirley Danz enjoys her work. She enjoys research and helping people. What's more, she says, when people receive information from her, they take it and work with children to help them learn about their Savior. "It's like the whole ministry grows—from one little seed," Shirley said.

"Shirley represents the caring attitude of our entire staff at Lutheran Special Education Ministries," said Roger DeMeyere, Executive Director. "From our resource room teachers, to our on-site consultants, to our support staff here at the Detroit office, each one of us is truly concerned about that individual child who needs to achieve a quality Christian education. Lutheran Special Education Ministries is here, willing to work with you to help in whatever way we can," DeMeyere said.

For more information about these consultants, please call (313) 368-1220 and ask for the Ephphatha (pronounced "ef-fa-tha") Center Religious Education Consultants.

"Shirley represents the caring attitude our entire staff at Lutheran Special Education Ministries has," said Roger DeMeyere, Executive Director.

Around the ministry

Ephphatha Center

by **Kathy Krause**

As the Lord gently opens the blossoms of summer flowers, Ephphatha Center continues to open doors of opportunity for students with special learning needs.

When a child is evaluated, parents and teachers receive insights into the struggles faced in the classroom. The petals of doubt and frustration are pinched back to reveal the child's strengths. Future success is assisted by encouraging classroom modifications and by teaching coping techniques.

Around the country, Sunday school teachers and parents receive information about religious methods and materials suitable for their students with special needs. The seeds of knowledge of the glory of God's kingdom are planted where before they were unable to take root.

Many schools with on-site consultants expressed pleasure with the cooperation between the staff and our consultant. The continuing efforts of collaborative teaching strategies produce the sweet fruit of success for all children in a school building, not just those with diagnosed handicaps.

The flowers in our Lord's garden may vary dramatically by shape, size and color, but one constant remains: the ongoing thirst for His forgiveness and promise of everlasting life.

Michigan

by **Gloria Burley, Director**

In Michigan, children with special needs have been blessed with 120 years of Christian service. On March 31, 1993, Lutheran Special Education Ministries celebrated its 120th birthday. The celebrations at the campus school, North Detroit Lutheran, were designed to show daily life as it was in the 1870s.

A week earlier, the children visited Greenfield Village, where they experienced lessons in a one-room schoolhouse and visited shops of the era. After chapel March 31, everyone was invited to put a handprint on the school's 120th birthday banner. This colorful banner is displayed in the administrative wing.

In the afternoon, the children dipped

candles, baked cornbread, shook butter, made berry ink and tried to write with the quill pens they cut. They also had ice cream and birthday cake for the afternoon snack.

During the afternoon, small groups were taken on tours of the building and heard about the history of the ministry. One dorm room was decorated with old quilts, dolls, tintypes, clothing and books from the late 1800s. Everyone enjoyed the day.

The time flew by, but we received a sense of our history and gratitude to God for the opportunities He has made available to all of us. As this ministry completes 120 years of teaching about Christ to children with special learning needs, we also look forward to a future in His service.

New York

Paula Rosen, Director

In New York, we are increasing service to children, support to schools and staff size. We are blessed by a new addition to our consultant teaching staff. We have grown from one to four special education teachers in one year. The number of evaluations administered to children in Lutheran schools has more than doubled this year as well as an increase in almost 200 percent for consultations with parents, teachers and administrators.

Lutheran Special Education Ministries provided 13 in-service workshop presentations to faculties and parents. As

a result, many teachers and parents recognize a solution to a problem that was previously a mystery. Referrals are common after a presentation and help for the student is not far behind.

After we identify a student's strengths and weaknesses, we develop strategies to facilitate learning. We care less about "how smart you are" and focus on "how are you smart!" This brings success in the classroom for children who have known too much failure. What a wonderful feeling to know we contribute to a child's learning!

Each consultant brings expertise to the position, including a master's degree in reading plus clinical experience in diagnosing and remediating reading problems; crisis intervention with abused women; experience in respite care for retarded children; and bilingual abilities.

Our newest on-site consultant, Lillian Hernandez, is at St. John Lutheran School, Glendale, N.Y. Lilly speaks English and Spanish, which has been an advantage since some of the students at St. John's are bilingual.

The number of students served has increased from 29 in the 1991-92 school year to 98 in the 1992-93 school year. The Lord makes His face shine upon those who make a Christian education a reality for children with special learning needs.

Illinois

James Krone, Director

In Illinois, we are working on a review and evaluation of the 1992-93 school year.

(Continued on page 4.)

Last chance to attend the reunion!

Lutheran Special Education Ministries (formerly Lutheran School for the Deaf) is pleased to announce a reunion Aug. 16-22 to celebrate the 120th anniversary of our ministry. All former students, staff members, teachers and houseparents are invited to attend.

Program

- **Monday-Wednesday, Aug. 16-18:** Fellowship; sight-seeing tour; captioned movies shown in evenings.
- **Thursday, Aug. 19:** Trip to Frankenmuth, including shopping; a visit to the famous Bavarian Inn Restaurant, etc.
- **Friday, Aug. 20:** Fellowship.
- **Saturday, Aug. 21:** All-day open house tour; old movies of campus; display of old pictures; evening banquet and presentation of skits.
- **Sunday, Aug. 22:** Continental breakfast followed by church service.

For more information, please contact:

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Association members hold annual meeting May 11

Lutheran Special Education Ministries Annual Meeting was held Tuesday, May 11. Michigan Lieutenant Governor Connie Binsfeld gave the keynote address: "Our Children—Our Destiny."

Binsfeld's address focused on the impact that society has on children, how society is moving away from a Christian value system. As Christians, we need to make sure that we reflect Christian values for our children, who are our future.

She praised Lutheran Special Education Ministries for its work in helping children with special learning needs for 120 years. Binsfeld noted how the little things volunteers and board members do make a big difference in children's lives. She encouraged us to continue reaching out with caring arms to children.

The business meeting included the ap-

proval of the budget for the 1993-94 fiscal year of \$1,747,000.

Elmer Engel, who served on the Board of Directors of Lutheran Special Education Ministries for 57 years, was honored as he retired from his position. Engel served as treasurer and as a member of the finance committee. He thanked the members for the recognition; he also thanked God for his wife, Dorothea, who passed away 16 days before the meeting. She had always been an active partner with him as he served Lutheran Special Education Ministries.

Also leaving the Board of Directors is **Robert Marowske**, who served for 13 years.

Two new lay delegates were elected: **Ernest Fackler**, president of E.C. Fackler Inc., Workman's Compensation Management, a member of Emmanuel, Dearborn; and **Karl Mueller**, general agent for Lutheran Brotherhood in Southeast Michigan and a member of St. John, Rochester.

Reelected were **Rev. Wilton Fluegge**, assistant pastor of Christ Our Savior, Livonia, and **Rev. Al Prouty**, pastor of Mount Hope, Allen Park.

Roger DeMeyere, Executive Director of Lutheran Special Education Ministries, spoke about how the ministry continues to move ahead. Even though the ministry has struggled financially, DeMeyere pointed out that God's work done in God's way will never lack funds to accomplish His

work. DeMeyere stressed that throughout the years, our ministry has continued to help children because we have been able to do God's work in God's way, and God will help our ministry succeed.

If you are interested in more information about the programs or about our ministry, please call (313) 368-1220.

Around the ministry

(Continued from page 3.)

Our resource rooms are filled—we are serving many more students than in the history of the Illinois programs through our combined resource rooms and consultants.

In our efforts to serve all children with special learning needs, we provide teacher inservices, case consultations, teacher support and materials to Lutheran schools that have their own programs, yet call on us for our assistance.

In this period of review, we look to the future to see how we can even better serve children with special needs. With the help of organizations like the Northern Illinois District LWML, from whom we received a \$12,000 grant to help enable our on-site consultant program to grow, our future in Illinois is strong.

As we help students by encouraging them through their strengths and helping them cope with their weaknesses, we build their self-worth to help them realize that they are God's special children.

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