

More children will receive care

Responding to opportunities

When you're at church or at the mall or grocery store next weekend, look around. Chances are there will be a number of children present. Some of them—whether you know it or not—have a learning disability. About one in every seven children has a learning disability of some type.

You can't tell a child has a learning disability by looking at him or her—like you can see a physical handicap, like a wheelchair or guide dog. A learning disability can range from trouble understanding how to do a math problem, trouble spelling, difficulty reading, a hard time paying attention to a teacher, or a combination of any of these or other things.

Having a learning disability does not mean the child is mentally retarded. Many children with learning disabilities have average or above average intelligence.

An increased need

If it seems like you hear about children with learning disabilities more often these days, you're right. You do. You even hear about well-known people—including actors and business people—who didn't do well in school, but who now know they have dyslexia (a type of learning disability), which affected their ability to learn to read and spell.

According to Dr. Judith Preuss, dean of the education division at Concordia College in Seward, Neb., helping learning disabled children is one of the fastest growing areas of service to children in Lutheran schools. The only area that is receiving more attention is preschools.

Service is required

In 1975, the federal government

passed public law 94-142, which mandated that any child with special needs must receive services irrespective of the school they attend or the handicap they possess (whether it's a learning disability, mental retardation, blind, deaf, emotionally or physically handicapped).

For example, say a child attends St. Paul Lutheran School in a city in Indiana. If the teacher is concerned about a student's learning ability, she can refer him or her for testing to the local public school psychologist. The public school is bound by law to provide that testing identification service at no charge.

Also by law, any child who needs special services is entitled to receive those services. It doesn't matter whether the child attends public or private school. However, it is the responsibility of the public schools to actually provide that service (since the public schools receive the federal funds; parochial schools cannot receive federal funds).

In the mid-1970s, when this public law first passed, the public school psychologist or resource room teacher could come into the Lutheran school and help the children there. However, laws now prevent many states from providing service on the grounds of a parochial school.

So today, if a child identified with learning disabilities attends a parochial school that does not have its own resource room, that child must be transported to a public school where those services can be provided.

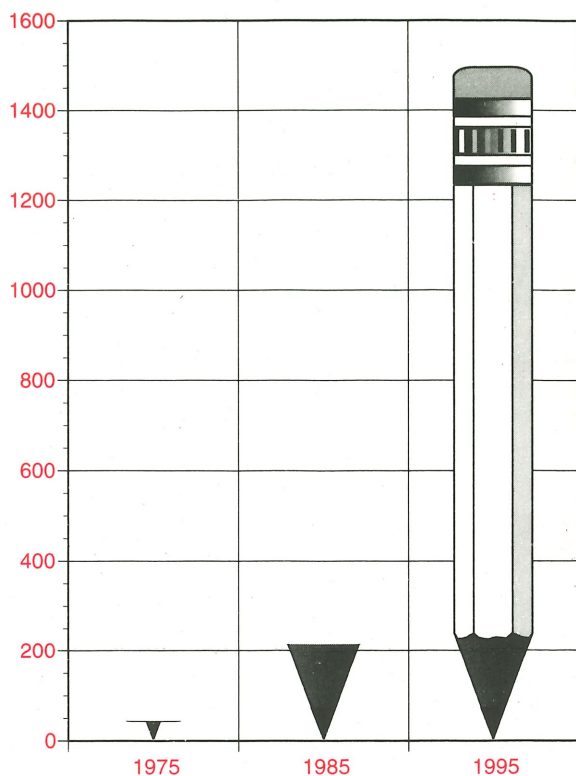
Expanded services

Even though parochial schools are not required by law to have programs of their own for learning disabled chil-

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A Lutheran Special Education Ministries resource room teacher working with a student being served by our ministry.



*How
our
ministry
has
grown
over the
last 20
years!*

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dren (the children who need the special services usually then attend public schools), there are some Lutheran school systems that provide this additional service. These schools believe that special services should be provided in a Christian context, so the child can learn about God's saving Word along with the regular classwork. That's something they wouldn't get if they went to a public school.

That's where Lutheran Special Education Ministries comes in. "Detroit [Lutheran Special Education Ministry] has been very instrumental in starting programs in Chicago and New York," Preuss commented, as well as in Michigan.

The network of schools associated with Lutheran Special Education Ministries now totals 19 in Michigan; six in New York; and 18 in northern Illinois. This number includes both schools that have a resource room operated by Lutheran Special Education Ministries as well as those schools that use an on-site consultant. Each regional service area of Lutheran Special Education Ministries also provides student evaluation services by a school psychologist.

Lutheran Special Education Ministries also has the Ephphatha Center, which was established in 1984 to pro-

vide outreach as a national Christian resource for special education. This department responds to hundreds of requests each year from schools and congregations throughout the United States and Canada who are searching for religious materials and materials for special needs children in Sunday school, confirmation or vacation Bible school.

A future article will feature Ephphatha Center's expanding outreach role.

Fort Wayne seeks a partnership

Ten years ago, the schools of the Lutheran Association for Elementary Education in Fort Wayne, Ind., saw a need to provide a Christian education not only for the children in their school system who could learn in a regular classroom, but also for those children who needed special attention.

"The idea was for our association to operate a resource room, hire a special education teacher, and kids from any of our schools in the system could be enrolled in the school where the resource room was: St. Paul Lutheran School," said Clifford A. Dietrich, superintendent of the association.

"Since then," Dietrich added, "some of the individual schools have begun their own resource room program for their own students. They see a need."

But more needs to be done. That's why Lutheran Special Education Ministries was asked to do a feasibility study for bringing their services to Indiana.

Dietrich knew about Lutheran Special Education Ministries work in Michigan, New York and Illinois. "We have speculated about forming a partnership with them for several years," he added. That way, the network of resources and resource room teachers could be expanded.

Right now, the Indiana District, upon the request of the Fort Wayne association has sent out a survey to all Lutheran schools in the state of Indiana. "Through a partnership with Lutheran Special Education Ministries, we'd eventually like to expand to the whole state of Indiana—reaching out to more and more children all the time," Dietrich said.

Our Vision

The vision of Lutheran Special Education Ministries has expanded over the years to include all handicapped children. Lutheran Special Education Ministries is a Christ-centered organization with a national vision to reach out to Lutheran and other Christian denominations to open the doors of schools and congregations for children who are handicapped with special learning needs.

"A consultant recently described Lutheran Special Education Ministries as one of those rare organizations that has adapted to its changing environment by responding to ministry opportunities," Roger DeMeyere, Executive Director, said.

Lutheran Special Education Ministries began more than 120 years ago as an orphanage. Its ministry quickly shifted to focus on deaf children (then known as Lutheran School for the Deaf). Due to the effect of public laws and medical advances, in the mid-1970's the focus shifted again to reaching out to all handicapped children to enable them to receive a Christian education.

"I believe the Lord will continue to bless us for having a vision and mission that is responsive, a vision and mission that lets the little children come to Him," DeMeyere said. "As executive director for eight years, I am still excited to be a part of it all!"

Around the ministry

Michigan

by Gloria Burley, Director
Michigan Program

An era comes to an end. For the 1995-96 school year, we will be transferring the remaining 20 students in our special education day school in Detroit to regular schools in the community. For more than a century, our campus was the site of a residential school for the deaf. In the mid-70s, we began to change by serving hearing children who were handicapped with special learning needs.

Just as there was no longer a need for the residential school for the deaf, now there is no longer a need for a special education day school.

It's all part of our plan to have children educated in the most appropriate environment possible. Even though we know it's the right thing, some of us are still saddened to see this era come to an end. I'm sure the sadness will turn to joy as we see the programs and children grow.

New York

by Paula Rosen, Director
New York Program

It is hard to believe that we will be entering our fifth year of ministry here in New York. Each year we expand. Holy Trinity Community School in Hollis, Emmanuel Lutheran School in Patchogue, and Trinity Lutheran School in Hicksville are expanding their programs; St. John Lutheran in Glendale and Lutheran School of Flushing and Bayside are continuing their present programs.

Leif Ericson Day School in Brooklyn, Immanuel Lutheran School in Whitestone and Redeemer Lutheran School in Glendale are adding programs. There are already inquiries from other schools for future programs.

We have been blessed with three wonderful on-site consultant teachers this year. **Elizabeth Munz** and **Eileen DiLauro** will complete their second year of consulting. **Rose Marie Sheridan** will finish her first year with the ministry. Special thanks and blessings go to the classroom teachers with whom we

work. Their support of children with special needs is tremendous.

The children are what keeps us going and going and going. . . . We keep sending out the message that God loves each and every child no matter what their ability. We are energized by His love for us and our children. Sometimes our successes are great; but often, they are small. When added together, there are many. It may be that we will not know the fruits of our labor for many years. The impact of giving a child a strong Christian faith is not always readily apparent. God's love is patient and kind and strong. You reflect that love when you give to our children and we bless each and every one of you.

Illinois

by Jim Krone, Director
Illinois Program

Spring is a time for hope and the promise of our resurrected Lord. Many of the children in Christian schools recently heard the message of Easter and God's promise to us all. I rejoice in the fact that many students in Illinois with special learning needs can also receive that message of joy and hope. Our Illinois programs are currently serving 18 schools in the Chicago area. Three new programs will be

added in the next school year which will enable more special children to learn in a Christian environment.

This growth and the success of serving children in Christian schools is due to our very dedicated teaching staff.

In addition to working directly with students and consulting with parents, teachers, principals and pastors, our teachers also have been working with the public school to help get needed materials, equipment and services for our special children. This has been very helpful when a child has a material or equipment need that is beyond our financial means.

As we look to the end of the school year and on to the next, it becomes apparent that we will again be looking for new staff members to fill the positions created by our growth.

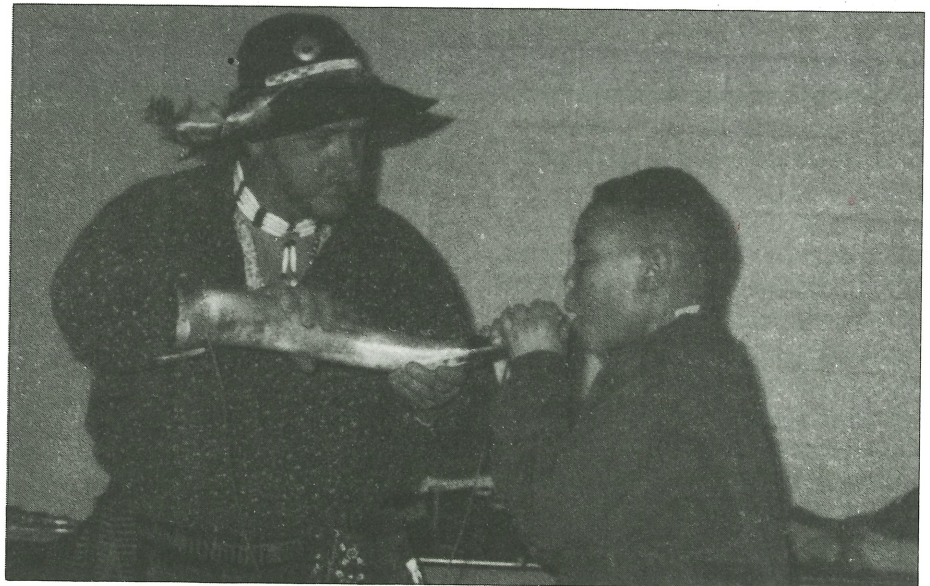
The next month of this school year is a time for teachers to evaluate goals and objectives of their students and for all of us to look to the promise of Christ's resurrection so we can prepare His special children to become all that they can be.

Ephphatha Center

by Kathy Krause
Ephphatha Center

The mother bird calls, "Flap your wings." Can't you just see a mother

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Demetrius Howard, a student at North Detroit Lutheran School, blowing a French fur trapper's hunting horn during the study of Michigan history. Joyce Colman and James Mead presented the lives of a Chippewa Indian and a French fur trapper during a read-a-thon at North Detroit Lutheran School.

The Advocate

for Students with Special Learning Needs

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bird calling to her fledgling, "Flap your wings!" As the bird precariously balances on the edge of the nest, there is the excitement of reaching out to the unknown, the unexplored.

But what is this bird story about? Well, please bear with me. Originally, Ephphatha Center was responsible for a number of functions including educational curriculum, psychological and educational evaluations of prospective students in Michigan, and consultation regarding religious materials and problem-solving to meet the special needs of children in local parishes.

Progressively, the mission of providing resources to parents, teachers and pastors as they support the Christian education of their children within congregations has soared. During the 1989-90 school year, there were four such contacts. Currently, there are more than 200 consultations across the country.

This swelling in outreach signals the fulfillment of a vision, namely that Ephphatha Center would clearly emerge as the national arm of Lutheran Special Education Ministries. To that end, functions involving educational curriculum and student evaluations have been transferred to the Director of Michigan Programs.

Within this redefined image, **Kathy Krause** has accepted the newly created position of coordinator of Ephphatha Center. She has ministered within Ephphatha Center for six years, primarily serving as an educational consultant and evaluator. Kathy is a

communicator, educator and problem-solver who has considerable training and experience in special education issues including early childhood, learning disabilities, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, and also religious curricular materials for children with special needs.

Originally, the name of Ephphatha was chosen to link Lutheran Special Education Ministries to our heritage of serving children with hearing impairments. Ephphatha is an Aramaic word that means "be open"; it is the word Christ used when He touched the deaf-mute with His finger and healed the man.

Therefore, cherishing the healing that God's Word brings, we welcome the focus and extension of resources, ministry and vision as evidenced by these changes within Ephphatha Center. Realistically, there is little more to say than, "Flap your wings!"

Editor's Note: The expanding role of Ephphatha Center will be discussed in future editions of "The Advocate."

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People: our most valuable resources

■ **Dianna Bonfield** has joined the staff of Lutheran Special Education Ministries. She will serve as a development counselor in Northern Illinois—the Chicago area. Dianna's responsibilities will be in fund-raising and friend-raising in Illinois for our ministry.

■ **Jim Pagels** will serve as Coordinator of Psychological Services in Michigan. Jim's responsibilities will include testing, consulting and working with teachers, parents and students to provide a successful educational environment for all students.

■ **Kathy Krause** will serve in a new, expanded role as Coordinator of Ephphatha Center. The Ephphatha Center will continue to provide help in finding religious education materials for children in Sunday schools and confirmation classes. They will also provide consultation services to schools and congregations interested in establishing a special education program for children with special learning needs.

These changes with our valuable human resources will enable our ministry to help more children across the United States with special learning needs to know their Savior, Jesus Christ.