

The Advocate

for Students with Special Learning Needs

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Sell the Campus - What A Blessing!

by Roger DeMeyere

What a blessing! An historic moment has arrived. Lutheran Special Education Ministries has reached an agreement to sell the Nevada Avenue campus in Detroit. We are selling it to the Cornerstone Schools Association, an ecumenical group that establishes Christ-centered schools in Detroit. This is an answer to prayer. In more ways than you may ever know.

Why We Did It: The Logical Thing

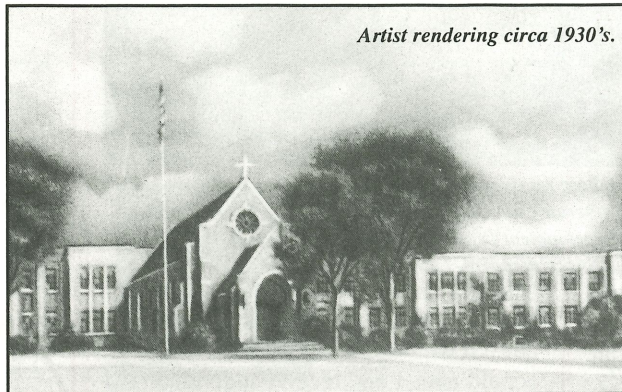
For years the board of directors and I struggled with selling this campus. We knew in our heads that selling was the right thing to do. It made good sense. The transformation in our mission from a residential school for the deaf to a more inclusive national special education ministry made the campus unnecessary. Children no longer came to us; we come to them. To where they live. Our building? More than 90,000 square feet. Other than some offices, it was empty. Wasted space. A burden. And no one had a clear vision for its use. Not even our Lutheran friends. So get rid of it. Sell it. Case closed.

The Heart Knows Better

No more emotion. Or so it seemed. In my heart I knew differently. The emotion in the issues of the past several years has taken its toll. Feelings denied. Hidden inside. Tears like rain in my heart. A flood. Tears for an old friend. This building. Its grounds. The memories. Such special times. My childhood. My work today. And so many others. How they've worked, played, cried, and laughed here, too. Over 123 years. And now to sell? How could we ever think? This is a bittersweet blessing, indeed.

In My Savior's Loving Arms

And no one but my Lord knew. Until now. Jesus in His wisdom and gentleness seemed to be saying to me, "Let it out. Let it go. Your feelings. Share them. It will help you. It may help oth-



ers, too. Only then will you see and feel the blessings of My heart."

As I relax in my Savior's loving arms, I've begun to let it out. To let it flow. The tears. As I recall all those cherished memories. The ministry, the life as I've known it. Soon to change.

With this letting go, letting God embrace me, comes my answer to prayer. And a peace. It is a blessing. There is no doubt. Now my tears are gone for a little while, my eyes are open, and I see more clearly. I feel the magnitude of His blessings. I am in awe. And I celebrate! The blessings of the past. The blessings for the future.

A Blessing for the Future.

Over the next five years Lutheran Special Education Ministries will receive a total of \$1.4 million dollars from the Cornerstone Schools Association. This blessing will be redirected to meet the demand for unequalled expansion.

Let me share with you how our ministry has grown. Let me share with you why we must grow even more.

In 1975 we served 40 deaf children. This year we're serving more than 2,000 children with various special learning needs.

And we've just begun. The needs of handicapped children across the nation are so great. We are compelled to respond! Is \$1.4 million enough to meet all the needs of all these children nationwide? Not nearly. But we know the Lord will take care of that, too. The Lord provides. He blesses abundantly. We shall continue in our mission, enabling children with special learning needs receive a Christian education.

A Blessing for the Present.

Children will again play on the corner of Nevada Avenue and Helen, two

(Continued on back page.)



... Our campus today. (Chapel in background.)

Jean Rehberg Wins 1996 Ephphatha Award

Jean Rehberg, a member of Holy Cross Lutheran Church in Fort Wayne, Indiana, is the 1996 recipient of Lutheran Special Education Ministries' annual Ephphatha Award. She received this bronze plaque in a ceremony held at her church on Sunday, August 25th.

"We focus the spotlight on a humble servant so that others may be led to follow her example," says Executive Director Roger DeMeyere.

At An Early Age

Her concern for the disabled began at an early age. Jean Rehberg (nee Tober) recalls her parents periodically taking her to visit a young man from their church who had mental disabilities. This experience touched the life of the little girl of Sturgis, MI. She would never be the same.

Jean Begins Her Life's Mission

Years, later, as a parent of a child with severe and profound mental disabilities, Jean personally felt the need to tell these children about their Lord and Savior Jesus Christ in a way they could comprehend. She began what would become her mission in a modest way, by making weekly home visits to teach Scripture to a teenager with developmental disabilities.

Then, 23 years after receiving her bachelor's degree in music from Valparaiso University, Jean completed a master's degree in special education at St. Francis College, Fort Wayne, Indiana.

That same year, 1975, Jean became the first director of special education for the Lutheran Association for Elementary Education (LAEE) in Fort Wayne. She developed the program, screened students to diagnose their difficulties, tutored special needs children and developed and implemented a parent/peer tutoring program for LAEE.

Her dedication didn't stop when the

dismissal bell rang; Jean led an after-school religion class for students with severe learning disabilities.

Pioneered Resource Room

In 1985 she established and supervised the first LAEE Resource Room, a



Jean Rehberg receives the 1996 Ephphatha Award at Holy Cross Lutheran Church, Ft. Wayne, Indiana. (L-r) Gregg Braun, LSEM Development Director; Jean Rehberg; Clifford A. Dietrich, Superintendent, Lutheran Association for Elementary Education.

haven where special needs children could gather and receive individualized instruction.

Although her duties as director were many, Jean somehow squeezed in time to volunteer. For 12 years at Holy Cross she taught a Sunday School class for students from the Ft. Wayne community who had severe and profound mental handicaps.

After serving as LAEE's director of special education for 17 years, Jean retired in 1992.

"A Quiet, But Powerful Force"

"Jean Rehberg has been a quiet, but powerful force in the progress of providing Christian education for children with special learning needs in the Fort Wayne metropolitan area," says Clifford A. Dietrich, superintendent of LAEE. "Our Lutheran community now takes for granted that special education is provided in our schools. We need to credit Jean for developing this attitude."

Still Serving Those With Special Needs

Although her employment ended, Jean's calling continued. In 1995 she began a Christian educational class at Holy Cross for mentally-impaired adults who live in the community. This past summer she also held a five-week Bible class for these adults.

Her future plans include incorporating special needs children into Holy Cross' 1997 vacation Bible school.

"Unquestionably, Jean Rehberg was the force in helping our educators, our parents and our congregations to see our Lutheran schools as places where kids are not allowed to fall through the cracks," comments Dietrich.

THANK YOU! THANK YOU! THANK YOU!

To Aid Association for Lutherans for two grants totalling \$5,700 for the 1996-97 school year. One grant of \$4,000 will help us purchase testing materials and purchase computer software. The second grant of \$1,700 will provide continuing education funds.

To Lutheran Women's Missionary League, Michigan District for \$20,000 toward "Operation Know and Grow."

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Around the ministry

New York

by Paula Rosen, Director
New York Programs

Let me introduce to you our three new teachers this year. They are:

Beth Blair attended Temple University, Philadelphia, PA, graduating with a bachelor of science in therapeutic recreation.

After working in her field for a few years, Beth wanted to give more of herself to children, so she achieved a master of science in special education from Long Island University-C.W.Post and then taught for four years in the public schools.

Now a teacher for Lutheran Special Education Ministries, Beth serves Lutheran School of Flushing and Bayside and Immanuel Lutheran in Whitestone.

Karen Harker graduated from State University of New York at Old Westbury with a bachelor of science in elementary education. She has recently completed a master of science in special education and reading at Dowling College.

Since receiving her bachelor's, she has taught at Holy Trinity Community School in Hollis, first teaching pre-kindergarten; then 3rd grade. This year Karen teaches 5th, 6th and 7th grade students in a self-contained special education class. This is her third year of teaching.

A 1993 graduate of the State University of New York at Old Westbury, NY in elementary education, **Kay Semour** serves Martin Luther High School in Maspeth five mornings a week and Redeemer Lutheran School in Glendale five afternoons a week. She recently achieved her master of science in special education at Adelphi University in Garden City, NY.

Michigan

by Kathy Krause, Director
Michigan Programs

Come and meet our new teachers.



Newly-married last this past August, **Kelley Fehn** began serving St. Peter, Hemlock, on October 1 for one-half day each week.

Kelley has a bachelor of arts in elementary education from Concordia, Ann Arbor, MI. She is also working on her special education endorsement.

Amy Shepich will be teaching special needs students all day, every day at St. Paul in Farmington Hills. Amy has a bachelor of science in child development from Michigan State University and is working toward a special education certificate.



Sondra Riggs team-teaches two mornings each week with veteran LSEM teacher Becky Bullock at Our Savior in Lansing. She has a bachelor of science in biology from Georgia Southwestern College in Americus, Georgia and a master of arts in secondary education from Murray State University in Murray, Kentucky.

Sherry Reichenbach has a bachelor of arts in general social studies from Concordia, Ann Arbor, MI; a master of arts in elementary education with a concentration in special needs and a teaching endorsement in mentally-impaired from Eastern Michigan University in Ypsilanti, MI. She has taught in Christian schools for 12 years.

Sherry serves at St. Peter in Eastpointe for five mornings a week and afternoons at St. Peter, Richmond; Calvary, Lincoln Park and Trinity, Wyandotte.



Ephphatha Center

by Kathy Krause, Coordinator
Ephphatha Center

Meet **Lisa Krenz**, our new resource specialist.



A native of Denver, CO, Lisa graduated in 1987 with a bachelor of arts in elementary education from Concordia University, River

Forest, IL.

After graduation, she served Lutheran Special Education Ministries in the Chicago area as a resource teacher at St. John's, Lansing, IL. In 1989 she moved to St. Louis, MO to serve Special Lutheran Classes first as a resource teacher, later, as a consultant.

While in St. Louis, Lisa graduated in 1993 with a master of arts in teaching special education from Webster University.

Lisa has helped produce a video distributed nationally to Lutheran schools, *Let's Teach the Way They Learn*; and has conducted numerous special education workshops. She is a regular contributor to *Teacher Interaction*, a magazine for Sunday School teachers.

As a resource specialist for Lutheran Special Education Ministries, Lisa consults with parents, teachers and pastors over the phone, suggesting teaching strategies and resources for special needs children.

Illinois

by Jim Krone, Director
Illinois Programs

Here's our newest teacher in the Windy City:

In 1987, **Deborah Mankiewicz** received her bachelor of arts in education from Concordia University, River Forest, IL. She is working toward a master of education in special education at the University of Illinois, Chicago.

In between classes, Deborah teaches two half-days each week at Bethel and Jehovah Lutheran schools in Chicago. She also teaches one-half day each week at a new program site, St. John Lutheran school in LaGrange, IL.

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Sell the Campus

(Continued from front page.)

ordinary streets in a city many have rejected. The Cornerstone Schools Association has a vision and need for a home, our home for the children. This land is theirs. The children's. Almost 123 years ago this property was consecrated to the Glory of God to serve children. Once again children will be nurtured. And God will still be glorified.

A Blessing for the Future.

A Blessing Honoring the Past.

A blessing for the future. A blessing honoring the past. Unexpected. The question on our minds: Where will Lutheran Special Education Ministries go?

In 1975 we served 40 deaf children. This year we're serving more than 2,000 children with various special learning needs.

The answer, unexpected blessings: We will stay right here. We will keep our corporate and regional offices in our home at 6861 Nevada in Detroit. And we will stay here, rent-free. A wonderful offer from Cornerstone. I give thanks for them. They understand our need for a home. They understand what this home has meant to us. And they honor our past by helping our future.

What More to Say?

How do I end this article when there remains so much more to say? My feelings flow. Like blessings. There is no end. Like God's love. No end. The past? The future? The same as this day. All are the same, to God. A blessing, a blessing indeed!



Roger DeMeyere is the Executive Director of Lutheran Special Education Ministries



As LSEM's first communications coordinator, Sandra brings 10 years' diverse communications experience to the ministry, including having served as an editorial assistant for Rev. Wallace Schulz, the Associate Lutheran Hour Speaker; editor of a regional business magazine; radio copywriter and free-lance direct marketing writer.

Sandra Eggers Is New Communications Coordinator

She will oversee all the ministry's communication, including producing the quarterly newsletter *The Advocate for Students with Special Needs*, developing media relations, issuing news releases, and exploring use of new media.

Sandra works from the newly-established communications office in Battle Creek, keeping in touch with Detroit and elsewhere via computer, fax and modem. She makes regular visits to the headquarters in Detroit, meeting with her

supervisor, staff, and board members. Sandra will also travel to Lutheran Special Education's two regional offices, in Illinois and New York.

She is a member of St. Paul in Battle Creek, MI where her husband, Steven, serves as senior pastor.

For more information on Lutheran Special Education Ministries, please call her at 616-968-9375; fax her at 616-968-1833 or e-mail her at SandraE915@aol.com.