

### “Operation SON-Shine” Helps You Plan VBS for Kids with Learning Disabilities

Has there ever been a “difficult” student in your Vacation Bible School classroom? Have you – or any VBS teacher you know – ever had that one particular student who had so much energy you could have sworn he drank rocket fuel before class? Have you ever had a child with a hearing, visual or mental impairment?

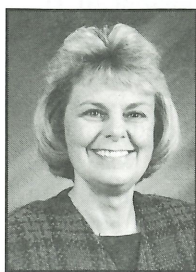
If you – or any VBS teacher, superintendent or pastor you know – can answer “Yes” to any of these questions, chances are you had a child with a special learning need in your classroom. And, chances also are, there were times you weren’t sure you knew how to handle the situation.

And you’re not alone. Numerous VBS teachers across the nation have encountered or will encounter similar situations.

According to the most recent statistics available from the U.S. Department of Education, in 1993 there were more than 2 million children nationwide identified as having a special learning need. This was an increase of more than 45 percent since 1980. Judging from this trend, educators expect to find more and more children who fit this category today.

That’s why the Ephphatha Center, the national outreach arm of Lutheran Special Education Ministries, is mounting “Operation SON-shine,” a program to increase both awareness of children with special learning needs and to offer congregations practical help in serving these special ones during VBS.

“Vacation Bible School is an excellent opportunity to reach out to children who may have never before heard the saving words of Christ’s love,” says Kathy Krause, Ephphatha



**Kathy Krause**

Center director. “What a beautiful chance to spread the Gospel in a relaxed setting, with activities that children enjoy. Congregations should not be fearful of including children with special needs in this loving setting.”

“Operation SON-shine” is so named because many of these children live in the darkness of their special learning needs. For example, the child may have a visual or hearing impairment that prevents her from receiving the information a teacher tries to convey. For another, his ears and eyes are working but it’s his brain that confuses the signals coming through these organs. No matter what the special learning need, “Operation SON-shine” will help VBS teachers nationwide reach these children with the light of Christ.

Through “Operation SON-shine,” you’ll be given a free “SON-shine Support,” a help sheet providing practical tips on how you as a volunteer VBS teacher can better teach these special children.

“The hands-on nature of most VBS curricula lends itself so well to including students with special needs,” says Lisa Krenz, Ephphatha Center resource specialist and developer of the “SON-shine Support.” “We developed this hand-out with the volunteer teacher in mind.



**Lisa Krenz**

You don’t need to have experience with special education,

just a little creativity and a desire to share the Gospel with all God’s children.”

Adds Kathy, “Christ tells us to ‘go and tell all;’ the SON-shine Support will help congregations fulfill that task.”

*Here are some of the helps you’ll find on your “SON-shine Support.”*

- Use small learning groups.
- Enlist extra volunteers to serve as teacher assistants.
- Talk with parents about their child.
- Stock up on “hands-on” materials such as clay, playdough, art supplies.
- Ask local experts such as parents of children with disabilities, adults with disabilities or special education professionals to conduct a disability awareness workshop for your VBS volunteers.

**Act today to get your free “SON-shine Support.”**  
Call 1-313-368-1220;  
Fax 1-313-368-0159  
or write to:

**Lisa Krenz**  
c/o The Ephphatha Center  
Lutheran Special  
Education Ministries  
6861 East Nevada Ave  
Detroit, MI 48234

# We're Seeking Nominations for the 1997 Ephphatha Award

*"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."*

—Statement of Ministry

For 124 years God has blessed our ministry. Thousands upon thousands of children with special learning needs have received a Christian education.

But we haven't done it alone. Throughout the years there have been countless men and women quietly working within their congregations, their communities, within the Body of Christ, to ensure that children with special learning needs learn about Jesus in ways they can comprehend.

Their Christian descendants carry on this work yet today, continuing to serve such children in an exemplary fashion.

To honor these dedicated people, our Board of Directors established the Ephphatha Award in 1984. "Ephphatha" is an Aramaic word that means "be opened." The Book of Mark records that Jesus spoke this word and restored the hearing of the deaf man. (Mark 7:31-37)

Each year we present the Ephphatha Award to recognize a member of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod who has made an outstanding contribution to the Christian education of special needs children in his or her congregation, community, or the church-at-large. We are now seeking nominations for the 1997 Ephphatha award. If you know of anyone who you believe fits the criteria, please send a cover letter nominating that individual and some record of that person's service. This record could include items such as a resume, vitae and/or letters of recommendation, for example.

**Please send these items by Tuesday, April 15, 1997 to:**

Executive Director Roger DeMeyere  
Lutheran Special Education Ministries  
6861 East Nevada Ave.  
Detroit, MI 48234

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## 1996 Ephphatha Award Winner

The 1996 recipient of this award was **Jean Rehberg**, a member of Holy Cross Lutheran Church in Fort Wayne, Indiana.

Jean began her ministry to children with special learning needs when she found her own daughter was among them. Years later, she completed a master's degree in special education, becoming the first director of special education for the Lutheran Association for Elementary Education (LAEE) in Fort Wayne. While there she developed the program, screened students to diagnose their difficulties, tutored special needs children and developed and implemented a parent/peer tutoring program.

In 1985 Jean established and supervised the first LAEE resource room. Jean also led an after-school religion class for students with severe learning disabilities.

Jean retired in 1992 from the LAEE.

Her volunteer work includes 12 years of teaching a Sunday School class at Holy Cross for students within the Ft. Wayne community who had severe and profound mental handicaps.

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 lead a five-week Bible class for those adults. She plans to include special needs children into Holy Cross' 1997 Vacation Bible School.

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## THANKYOU!THANK YOU!THANKYOU!

Our thanks to **Aid Association For Lutherans (AAL)** for granting us

\$1,500 through the Lutheran Elementary School Grant Program. These funds will support in-service training for our teachers in MI, IL and NY.

Also thanks to **Lutheran Brotherhood** for \$2,050 of matched funds granted through the Primary Partners program. This program is designed to help participating elementary and pre-schools.

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## MMMM -mmm - So good, that Campbell's Soup!

Campbell's soup is more than just food for the tummy. It also helps feed our educational program here at Lutheran Special Education Ministries. Or, more precisely, the labels to these soups do.

So after you've enjoyed a can of that savory chicken noodle, please carefully remove the label. Once you have collected a few, please send them to:

**Lutheran Special  
Education Ministries  
c/o Campbell's Soup Labels  
6861 E. Nevada Ave.  
Detroit, MI 48234.**

Thanks a bunch. We - and the children we serve - are very grateful for your caring.

**The ADVOCATE** for Students with  
Special Learning Needs  
—USPS 150-480

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# Around the Ministry

## Michigan

by *Kathy Krause, Director*  
*Michigan Programs*

As the snowflakes start to fall and gently cover the dark, drab earth with a sparkling blanket of white, I am reminded of how our Savior's shed blood not only covers our sins, but truly eliminates them. What a blessing to know such unconditional love and saving grace found only in Him!

Under God's grace we have just ordered seven Alpha-Smart Pros. These are portable word processors that our students can use both in school and at home. Information can be transferred from that portable unit into a full computer for printing. A grant from Aid Association for Lutherans (AAL) allowed us to purchase this technology.

We also have some new phonemic awareness teaching materials that we're using on a trial basis in two of our resource rooms.

As the days race by, I try to take time to praise our Lord for guiding our work among His special children, all part of the Father's creation, never two the same, each child unique and distinct . . . much like an individual snowflake.

## Illinois

by *Jim Krone, Director*  
*Illinois Programs*

Christmas has long been packed away. Life is now back to normal.

I hope not. I hope your life is *not* back to normal – if normal means that Jesus also is packed away with the tinsel, only to be brought out again next year.

Even for us at Lutheran schools, it's easy to get so caught up in school that

we shove aside real learning, the real learning that comes at the feet of the Master Teacher Himself, Christ our Lord.

It is this real learning that we at Lutheran Special Education Ministries strive to make happen. This year we have enabled over 600 Illinois children with special learning needs learn about their Savior in ways they can comprehend. To accomplish this task we are blessed with many dedicated teachers.

As more and more children with special learning needs come to us wanting to hear the story of Jesus and His love, we need more and more tellers of that story. **Right now we're especially looking for part-time teachers in both Aurora and Chicago. And as we will add more programs in the next academic year, we'll also need teachers in Chicago, Springfield and Decatur.**

We thank God for all these blessings, especially for the privilege of telling these special little ones about Christ. Please join us in praying that God grant our teachers His wisdom and strength. We step out in faith knowing that He promises to be with us, enabling and empowering us to accomplish His ministry, to face the challenges before us.

## New York

by *Paula Rosen, Director*  
*New York Programs*

It has been a busy year so far. It is hard to believe that four years ago we had three half-day one day a week programs in three Lutheran schools, the equivalent of about 12 total hours per week. Today we have nine different programs in eight Lutheran schools equaling 240 total hours per week of service to children with

special needs in the New York area. We have, indeed, been blessed.

One of these blessings are the children of **Karen Harker's** self-contained classroom. These sixth and seventh graders are creating pop-up books. Once they're finished, they'll share their creations with the younger children at Holy Trinity Community School in Hollis.

Not only are we gifted with God's special little ones to serve but also are we gifted with God's workers who serve — the New York staff, teachers, secretaries, administrators, psychologists and friends of Lutheran Special Education Ministries. We thank God for all of them, His gifts to us.

## Ephphatha Center

by *Lisa Krenz, Resource Specialist*

It has been an exciting fall at the Ephphatha Center as we continue to receive calls from congregations all over the country requesting help preparing curriculum or asking for instructional strategies. Although each consultation is unique, they all share a common thread: a desire to share the precious message of the Gospel with all of God's people.

Most of these congregations care for their members by finding innovative ways to include everyone in regular educational programs or by providing a special Sunday School or Confirmation for them.

Others reach out into the community to serve those people with specific needs, such as adults with visual impairments, children with hearing impairments or teens with mental impairments.

Regardless of the specifics, it is obvious that the Holy Spirit is moving many congregations to action. We continually rejoice in our partnerships with congregations across the country, helping them spread the Gospel message to students of all ages who have many special educational needs.

# The Advocate

for Students with Special Learning Needs

Lutheran Special Education Ministries  
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Detroit, MI 48234

Address corrections requested

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## The Secret of True Riches

by Gregg Braun  
Development Director

*This is all the inheritance I can give to my dear Family. The Religion of Christ can give them one which will make them rich indeed.*

—Patrick Henry  
from his last will  
and testament  
November 20, 1798.

As a Christian, I financially support many organizations that proclaim our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, like Lutheran Special Education Ministries, for example, I bet you do, too. We know that our material possessions and earthly lives are not really important. What's truly important — why we've been put on this earth — is to tell others about Jesus' saving us from our sins. What's truly important is life with our Savior for all eternity. These are the true riches. It's just the way you and I live our earthly lives. We help tell the story of God's love for us in Jesus Christ by financially supporting Christian organizations that proclaim the Gospel and that we strongly believe in.

That's good — for as long we're living. Have you ever wondered what

happens when God calls you home? What becomes of an organization like Lutheran Special Education Ministries when you leave this earthly life, an organization that depends upon your financial gifts?

Well, in all likelihood, the money stops. For Lutheran Special Education Ministries it means there's one less textbook purchased; one less teacher hired; one less child with special learning needs helped.

*One less child who hears the Gospel.*

But it doesn't have to be this way. And you can help, even after you're living in your heavenly mansion. How? By Christian estate planning. Already many people like you have ensured that God's work will continue even after they've left this earth. They've done so by remembering Lutheran Special Education Ministries in their wills, trusts, unitrusts, gift annuities and through insurance policies.

If you've already remembered Lutheran Special Education Ministries in this way, thank you very much. Thank you for ensuring that God's work at Lutheran Special Education Ministries will continue.

**If you haven't yet, please do. You can start by phoning, writing or**

faxing me at the Development Office at:

Lutheran Special Education Ministries  
6861 East Nevada  
Detroit, MI 48234  
Phone 313-368-1220  
Fax 313-368-0159

No matter how you reach me, I'll be glad to answer any questions you may have on how you can begin Christian estate planning.

### GET READY . . .

. . . to offer praise and thanks to our gracious Heavenly Father for His countless gifts to Lutheran Special Education Ministries through these many, many years. The 125<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of this Ministry will be celebrated in 1998. More details to come.