

# Happy Hearts School and Ash/Craft Industries: Crafted from the Hearts of Caring People



Bobby Stewart of Ashtabula and Tammy Hayes of Conneaut dance at the first Ash/Craft Sock Hop held on April 17, 2010. Photo by Warren Dillaway - Ashtabula Star Beacon

Kathy Covert Warnes

## Honoring the Hearts and Lives of Happy Hearts People



My brother Kim Covert was born in November 1952, brain damaged from a forceps birth. My mother and father, like countless other parents of handicapped children, had to find personal and community resources to cope and try to give Kim a good quality of life. Happy Hearts served as a vital community resource that built Kim's sense of self-worth and his faith in his ability to accomplish tasks and make positive contributions to his family and community. Kim would be ready for the Happy Hearts bus to pick him up at least twenty minutes before the scheduled time.

He would talk about his school at the top of his voice (he was deaf) and every night he put Happy Hearts School at the top of the list of his thankful prayers, (usually at the top of his voice)! The Golden Nozzle Award he won for cleaning gas nozzles occupied the place of honor on his bedroom wall. Now it occupies a place of honor in my office and it makes me smile every day. Kim did not go on to be president of a company or make a million dollars after he graduated from Happy Hearts. He did better than that. He used the skills he had learned from Happy Hearts to enjoy a good quality of life, and for the most part, he enjoyed a happy life.

Happy Hearts changed Kim's life, and countless parents and students have had life-changing experiences at Happy Hearts and Ash/Craft. I hope this history, in small part, honors Happy Hearts Ash/Craft people past and present and I dedicate it to the

This history is dedicated to the people of Ashtabula County who made Happy Hearts School and Ash/Craft Industries possible and the staff, teachers, and volunteers who made them prosper.

Kathy Covert Warnes

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# Introduction: Happy Hearts and Ash/Craft

Working Through the Years

## Happy Hearts and Ashcraft in the Beginning

Happy Hearts School and Ash/Craft Industries fits into the history of Ashtabula County as snugly as the story of the Ashtabula train wreck or The Pittsburgh & Conneaut Dock or the Pierpont Picnic. Disabled and mentally retarded people and their families have often had to fight uphill battles for public education and tools to forge their futures. In March 1954, a small group of Ashtabula County parents of disabled children were determined to provide opportunities for their children to have a brighter future. They created the Ashtabula Council for Retarded Citizens



and by March 1955, their actions had enabled Happy Hearts School to open in the basement of the Methodist Church on Elm Street in Ashtabula. The new school opened with five students and was the first school in the county for children with disabilities.

Happy Hearts School continued to grow and operated in several Ashtabula Churches and locations from 1956 to 1968. In 1967, the Ohio Senate passed Senate Bill 169, creating a Board of Mental Retardation and Ashtabula County voters passed levies to operate the school.

In 1968, Happy Hearts School moved to its location on South Ridge Road in Kingsville, and by 1970, the school's program included 233 children and adults. In 1977, Ash/Craft Industries opened its sheltered workshop program, eventually providing over five hundred children and adults with meaningful education and training to lead productive lives. By 2002, Happy Hearts offered learning opportunities to 140 children at Happy Hearts School in Kingsville as well as to satellite classrooms in Andover, Braden Junior High, Austinburg Elementary School, and Geneva Junior High School.

The passing years brought changes to Ashtabula County and these changes have affected the future of Happy Hearts. A December 2017 story in the Ashtabula Star Beacon explored the directions of the next chapters in Happy Hearts and Ash/Craft history and reported that Happy Hearts currently served a total of seventy-nine children, forty-five at Happy Hearts School in Kingsville and thirty-four at satellite sites in Geneva, Ashtabula, Grand Valley and Pymatuning Valley.

In November 2017, voters defeated a levy to continue financing Happy Hearts and Ash/Craft. By early 2018, the Ashtabula County Developmental Disabilities Board transferred operations of Happy Hearts to the Ashtabula County Educational Services Center. Ash/Craft Industries was slated to be privatized.

Through the years, Happy Hearts School and Ash/Craft Industries have provided a solid foundation for developmentally disabled children and adults in Ashtabula County enabling them to build productive and satisfying lives.

## Blue Notes

Happy Hearts Alma Mater by Mike DeMarino

Happy Hearts with blue on blue,  
The sun shines down on you,  
Happy Hearts with blue on blue,  
Our colors proud and true.  
Through the years we grow and grow.  
Our Pride and Love we'll always show,  
Happy Hearts with blue on blue,  
Our Hearts lift up to you.

## Chapter One: Determined Parents Start a School



### **Happy Hearts in the Beginning: 1950s and 1960s: Learning in Many Locations**

On March 14, 1954, a group of concerned and determined parents gathered at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Stephen Weintz, Jr. in Geneva, Ohio. The parents were concerned because they hadn't been able to find schools to educate their developmentally disabled children and they were determined to found their own school if the existing ones couldn't or wouldn't take their children.

### **Parents Create the Ashtabula County Council for Retarded Children**

In the 1950s there were few if any social safety nets for children with developmental disabilities, including Downs Syndrome, Autism, Cerebral Palsy, Brain Injury, Spinal Bifida, Behavior Disorders and other conditions. Doctors would often give parents of these children the stark choices of keeping their children at home or placing them in an institution. The group of parents that gathered in Geneva on this March Sunday wanted more choices for themselves and their children. They organized the Ashtabula County Council for Retarded Citizens and they elected Gene Moroski of Kingsville, president; Mrs. Stephen Weintz of Geneva, vice president; and Mrs. John Wilkinson of Geneva, secretary. Mrs. Paul R. Berg of Ashtabula later took over as secretary.

The Council for Retarded Citizens identified its goals as winning over the general public to recognize and value the school program and to adequately fund the school. The Council spent the next year solving problems they encountered starting the school and helping it grow. They did not receive financial aid from the county or state until 1957, so they had to sponsor bake sales, dances, and donations to raise funds for the school. The Council faced uphill battles finding qualified teachers who could accept the small salary of \$200 a month. The children attending the school were scattered across Ashtabula County and the parents of the students were responsible for transportation until the Council could afford to hire a station wagon and driver.

### **Ashtabula County Day School for Retarded Children Opens**

Finally, the Council opened the Ashtabula County Day School for Retarded Children on March 14, 1955, in the basement of the First Methodist Church on Elm Avenue in Ashtabula with Mrs. Charles Bennett of Amboy the first teacher and Mrs. Scott Tarleton of Geneva the assistant teacher. Mrs. Bennett had studied two years at Otterbein College and four years at the Moody Bible Institute and worked as a social worker in Cleveland. The two new teachers had to develop their custom teaching techniques as the classes progressed, since they had no guidelines.

The first student roll call consisted of eight children who came to classes on designated weekdays from 9:30 to 1:30. The teachers taught them social graces, eating and handling utensils, paying attention, and following directions. Their parents paid tuition of \$6 per week. On April 18, 1955, Ohio Secretary of State Ted Brown, granted a non-profit corporation charter to the Ashtabula Council for Retarded Citizens, Inc. Trustees listed were Neal V. Collander of Ashtabula, Joseph P. Malone of Geneva, and Robert H. McMurray of Conneaut.

The joint efforts of a few parents seeking a school for their own children created the Council for Retarded Citizens and Happy Hearts School in the short space of a year. Gene Moroski, first president of the organization, spearheaded its activities. Gene and his wife Nadine played a vital role in establishing and expanding the Council from a few interested families to a community-wide organization.

In May of 1955, school staff and the Council for Retarded Citizens held an open house for parents and friends to see what the program had accomplished. Funds for the past year came from donations from individuals, organizations, clubs, and many from the November Seal campaign. School closed at the end of May and reopened in September 1955, in the Methodist Church basement with twelve

children enrolled. One teacher and an assistant were hired and parents furnished the transportation.

After filling out the reams of paperwork, the Council for Retarded Citizens and the Ashtabula County Day School for Retarded Children applied for state aid under Senate Bill #157 and obtained E1 cards from local school boards. The children underwent IQ tests, medical exams, and Social Maturity tests. Teachers, delegates, and several Council members attended the ARC Convention in Dayton, Ohio. School recessed at the end of May 1956, and by September school officials were searching for a place to reopen because the Methodists were beginning a remodeling program.

### **The Harris Memorial Presbyterian Church Years – 1956-1958**



*1956. Seated around a table, retarded children listen attentively to lessons being read by Mrs. Charles Bennett. The children focus their attention on the teacher. The class is being conducted at Harris Memorial Presbyterian Church. An open house was held at the school Friday night.*

On September 4, 1956, the Ashtabula County Council for Retarded Citizens moved



the Ashtabula County Day School for Retarded Children to the basement of the Harris Memorial Presbyterian Church, West 58th Street, in Ashtabula. Eighteen pupils were enrolled and they attended classes from 9:30 to 2:00, with their parents paying \$6.00 a week for tuition. The Council hired teachers Mrs. Charles Bennett and Mrs. William Barndt, and the teachers transported the children in their own station wagons with the Council paying the mileage.

In October 1956, the school held an open house to acquaint parents and the public with the school and to view some of the children's accomplishments. To raise funds, the school and the Council participated in the State Seal Drive and the United Fund of Ashtabula City allocated \$950 for the school for the 1957 school year, the only fixed sum the Council received.

The Council also raised money at the Ashtabula County Fair by selling homemade candy and later Christmas cards. Country clubs, groups, organizations, and private individuals helped raise money as well with tax stamp redemptions. One mother's club held a Christmas party for the children. When classes closed the last week in May 1957, approximately twenty students were enrolled in two classes with a full-time teacher for each class. Again, the teachers furnished the transportation while the Council paid for the mileage. In September 1957, classes resumed at Harris Memorial Church in the Sunday School room with two full time teachers and an assistant.

Teachers again provided the transportation for the twenty-one children enrolled with the Council paying the mileage. Parents paid \$15.00 per month tuition, but their children were not excluded if they could not afford to pay the tuition. At this point, the Ashtabula County Day School for Retarded Children rested on a more solid foundation. The State of Ohio had granted state aid, and the Council for Retarded Citizens raised money by again participating in the Seal campaign. The United Fund increased the Day School's allocation and it provided a fixed sum toward a hot lunch program. Council members, families, and friends raised money by selling homemade candy at the Ashtabula County Fair, by collecting tax stamps, and selling Christmas cards. The school also benefitted from the proceeds of fund raisers by local clubs and organizations.

In November of 1957, the School held an open house and the children presented a program. After the program, parents and friends toured the class rooms to view the children's work and learn about their progress for the year. The year 1957 also featured a name change for the school. Council members, Staff, parents, and friends voted on a name and Ashtabula County Day School for Retarded Children

became Happy Hearts School.

Besides acquiring a new name, Happy Hearts moved to a new location. On January 21, 1958, the school moved to a two-room brick school building that the Kingsville School had formerly occupied. An Ashtabula Star Beacon story summarized the progress of the Ashtabula County Day School for Retarded Children during its early years and noted its name change from the Ashtabula County Day School for Retarded Children to Happy Hearts School.

During its time at Harris Memorial Presbyterian Church the Ashtabula County Day School for Retarded Children acquired more pupils, funding from the community and state, and a new name. Mrs. Charles Bennett had already worked for the school for two full years and the Council also added another class and another teacher, Mrs. William Barndt of Austinburg, to help teach the enrolled twenty children. Both of the teachers took special classes at Lake Erie College at their own expense to expand their education. Teachers furnished transportation to and from school.

In 1956, the Ashtabula Council for Retarded Citizens incorporated as a non-profit organization and began to receive financial assistance from the state of Ohio, the United appeal, and tuition from local boards of education for children from their districts. The Council became a member of the Ohio Association for Retarded Citizens, gaining validation to move its program forward for legislation and a long-range development plan for retarded children and adults in Ashtabula County. Parents were also charged tuition, but this tuition was often waived when the parents could not afford to pay it, according to Council President Moroski. He said that in the future the school hoped to eliminate the tuition fee. "We do not refuse any youngster now," he said.

On April 10, 1957, the Ohio House of Representatives passed a bill placing the educational program of the Ashtabula County Day School for Retarded Children under the administration of the Department of Education and granting approximately 30 percent financial aid to the school. The Department required that teachers and classes receive its stamp of approval and changed the tuition rate from \$6.00 a week to \$15 a month and the teachers' salary to \$300 a month. In July, the Ashtabula County Council for Retarded Citizens unanimously changed the name of the school to Happy Hearts.

### **1958-1960: Still Moving and Still Growing Going to School in Kingsville**

Happy Hearts School soon outgrew the Harris Memorial Presbyterian Church and on January 21, 1958, Happy Hearts, its possessions, and pupils moved lock stock and three teachers to a little school building on School Street in Kingsville. The students and teachers enjoyed complete



kitchen facilities, two large classrooms with individual desks and a playground. The teaching staff had an office and the three full time teachers taught three classes. A total of twenty-eight children learned life skills in their new classrooms.

More room for classes is the feature of this building donated to the Happy Hearts School for Retarded Children by the Kingsville Board of Education. Also equipped with full kitchen facilities, the building formerly housed classes of the Kingsville Schools.

In April 1958, a delegate and alternate from the Ashtabula County Council for Retarded Citizens attended the annual convention in Youngstown and several Council members were also present to witness the Council, receive the award for the Best Press Book.

Registration for the fall 1958 term took place at the last Council Meeting in May, with twenty-eight pupils enrolling for the fall term. The school closed at the end of May and reopened at the Kingsville location in the first part of September 1958. Once again, the Council set up a booth at the Ashtabula County Fair selling homemade candy, making a net profit of \$530.00. Later in the fall, the Council and friends sponsored a booth at the Fall Festival in Jefferson, making a good profit and staff and friends of Happy Hearts sold Christmas cards and candles to benefit the school.

Happy Hearts School reopened in September 1958 with thirty-four pupils enrolled in three classes. A full-time teacher taught each class and each pupil paid \$1.00 to

\$1.50 every week, according to their home school district. Mrs. Paul Wing of the Ashtabula County Bible Club taught a Bible class for one hour one day each week. This school year, the Council hired three drivers and two teachers, each using their own car to transport students. The drivers now earned a salary as well as mileage.

On November 7, 1958, Happy Hearts School sponsored an open house, with the students presenting the program. Parents and friends enjoyed the program and then toured the classrooms to view the work and progress of each class. The Council provided coffee and cookies for everyone. The annual Seal Campaign held in November and the United Fund, which increased its allocation for the next year, provided financial support for the school and again, tax stamps were collected for additional income.

### **Onward to Austinburg!**

In January 1959, the Ashtabula County Council for Retarded Citizens hired Mrs. Paul Berg as a part-time clerical assistant. One teacher was hired for the coming year to replace Mrs. Esther Bennett, who was moving to Florida at the end of the school year in May. One assistant was hired to aid the three teachers in the fall term.

By 1959, the student population had expanded to over forty children and Happy Hearts had outgrown Kingsville school. On September 8, 1959, the friends and faculty again picked up the school and moved it to the former Austinburg grade school building which Happy Hearts received rent free with only utilities and janitor expenses. The school had four classrooms for the children and the faculty consisted of Mrs. Ray Bolmeyer of Rock Creek, superintendent: Mrs. Roger Sisson of Madison; and Mrs. Vincent Bishop and Miss Barbara White of Ashtabula.

The school curriculum grew to include music, small skills, simple games, the art of talking, and the beginning of the three R's, Reading, 'Riting, and 'Rithmetic. Volunteers came in to teach music and conduct a Bible Class. The tuition rate was adjusted from \$15 a month to \$75 a year and if a parent could not afford tuition, their child could still attend Happy Hearts.

The Ashtabula County Council for Retarded Citizens also oversaw the purchase of the first bus for the school to ease transportation problems. Three drivers were hired to drive their own cars.

The United Appeal allocated money to Happy Hearts School to help meet expenses

and the Council for Retarded Citizens and other organizations held bake and rummage sales and ran a candy booth at the Ashtabula County Fair. The Council also sold Christmas greeting cards.

### **Ashtabula County Council for Retarded Citizens Meets, Eats, Elects Officers, and Installs Staff.**

*Gathered around new equipment for the Happy Hearts School are newly elected officers (left to right) Mrs. Wilho Brunell, financial secretary; Mrs. Paul Berg, secretary; Mrs. Lawrence Custead, treasurer; W.E. Davies, vice-president; and Gene Moroski, president.*



Ashtabula County Council for Retarded Citizens elected and installed officers at the Annual Meeting held in Happy Hearts School, Austinburg. Installed were Gene Moroski, Kingsville, president; Winthrop Davis, Conneaut, vice-president; Mrs. Paul Berg, Ashtabula, secretary; Mrs. Wilho Brunell, financial secretary; and Mrs. Lawrence Custead, Ashtabula, financial secretary.

Committee chairmen for 1959 gave their reports. Teachers gave their reports telling of class progress, goals, and problems. Teachers are Mrs. Ray Bolmyer, Rock Creek, Superintendent; Mrs. Roger Sisson, Painesville; and Mrs. Vincent Bishop and Miss Barbara White, both of Ashtabula. Special recognition was given to volunteer teachers, Mrs. Fred Andrus, Austinburg, Bible Instructor and Miss Ruth Cook, Ashtabula, music instructor. Roger Sisson explained the jungle gym which he made for the younger pupils. A pot luck supper for council members, teachers and guests preceded the meeting. The supper committee included Mrs. Joseph Kapen, Jefferson; Mrs. Melvin Cichy, Pierpont; and Mrs. Charles vonTesmar.

## Time Line, 1950s

1954

March 14, 1954. Ashtabula County Council for Retarded Citizens organized. The history of Happy Hearts School and the Ashtabula County Board of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities can be traced back to a meeting of concerned parents in March 1954 at which the Ashtabula County Council for Retarded Citizens was formed. Those at the meeting were: Mr. and Mrs. Paul Berg; Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Kapen; Mr. and Mrs. G.L. Klozar; Mr. and Mrs. Gene Moroski; Mr. and Mrs. James Toomey, Mrs. Steven Weintz and Mr. and Mrs. John Wilkinson.

March 30, 1954. Public meeting at Spencer School. Mrs. Yeoman, teacher at Lake County School for Retarded Children, spoke and answered questions. Well attended by parents, teachers, school superintendents, and interested people.

May 1954, Board of directors formed. June 29, 1954. Public meeting to find out how to organize school and raise funds. Mr. Robert Cooke of Mahoning County Council for Retarded Children spoke. Attending were Dr. Joseph Miller, Senator Ralph Humphrey, R.S. Lanham, Superintendent of Harbor School.

July 1954. Met with school officials at Ashtabula High School to see how the public schools could help. Outcome: Legally, schools can help us, but do not have to help.

August 30, 1954. Film shown to public: "Children Limited" at Kingsville Church.

October 30, 1954. Petition circulated to parents for them to sign in order to get a class started. Was sent to the State Department of Welfare.

November 1954. Put notice in area papers to find teachers for our school.

December 21, 1954. Howard Scherman of Sunny Lane School for Retarded Children in Willoughby, spoke on how their school got started. Mr. Scherman is also head of Willoughby Elementary Schools. It is also interesting to note that their school was started first and then a "Parents Group" later.

1955.....January 18, 1955. Public film and speaker at Ashtabula High. Film was "Forget Not These Children." Miss Phyllis Newton, psychologist of Geneva, spoke and answered questions. Invitations and notices were sent to all county and city schools, organizations, and groups.

January 1955. Editorial in Star Beacon explaining need and for what we are aiming. Also stated the need for official recognition.

December and January 1955. The committee went to all schools and churches in Ashtabula looking for space for classes to start. Methodist Church offered basement Sunday School room.

January 27, 1955. Dr. Purcell, head of Special Education in Ohio, Division of Mental Hygiene, met in Jefferson with Commissioners, Child Welfare Board and anyone interested. Dr. Purcell explained how to start a school in Ashtabula county and told Mr. Camp, then head of the Child Welfare Board, that it was "his baby." Dr. Purcell also stated it was the biggest meeting of interested people in one county and yet what has happened to all these people?

February 1955. Applications for school.

March 4, 1955. School opened at Methodist Church – 9:30 to 1:30. Eight enrolled. Teacher, Mrs. Charles Bennett. Assistant, Mrs. Scott Tarleton.

April 18, 1955, Non-profit Corporation Charter granted by Ted Brown, Secretary of State.

May 17, 1955. First Open House at School. Open to the public.

September 1955. Dr. James spoke to the Council.

October 1955. Mrs. Charles Bennett spoke to Council.

November 1955. Seal Campaign

December 1955. The book, "Understanding Retarded in Ohio," was put in Ashtabula Harbor, Conneaut, and Kingsville Libraries.

1956

April 20, 1956. County Welfare Federation Panel: Dr. Stephane Ralph,

Superintendent of County Schools, Finley; Mr. Strauss of Mental Hygiene in State; and Mrs. Paul Berg, our Council Secretary. Reverend William Barndt, Moderator.

July 1956 Met with Child Welfare Board. Previous meetings were set up, but always canceled or not enough people attended to have a meeting. Members of the Child Welfare Board were invited at any time to attend our Council meetings to aid in our work.

September 1956 Harris Memorial Church in Ashtabula offered space for our classes and the school was opened in September with eighteen pupils enrolled. Two teachers were hired and also transportation is being furnished. Two teachers and one assistant employed. Tuition remained at \$6 per week. The council received \$950 dollars from the United Fund.

October 1956 Open House at school.

1957

Program was granted state aid. Two teachers and one assistant employed. Tuition rate at \$15 per month.

Ashtabula Star Beacon clipping. August 31, 1957. Ashtabula County Council for Retarded Citizens by unanimous vote, chose the name of "Happy Hearts" for the school to be held in Harris Memorial Presbyterian Church. Two teachers and one fulltime assistant were hired to staff the school.

1958

The program moved to an old brick school building in Kingsville. Three classes with three teachers. Enrollment of thirty-four.

1959

Austinburg school board loaned the Council a four-room brick school building. Enrollment at 48. Four full-time teachers One bus and one station wagon purchased for transportation. Tuition rate at \$75 per year. Sources of Income: Individual Donations: United Fund of Ashtabula Seal Campaign Group and Organizational Donations Sales Tax Stamp Redemption Tuition Fees Council Activities Proposed Sources of Income: State Aid County Commissioners Local School Boards Child Welfare Board Expenses: Teachers Wages Transportation Milk for lunches Building Rental. Supplies, heat, light, and janitorial services Council expenses, seals, postage, stationery, public educational



material, Conventions, Ohio Association Dues. IQ tests.

### 1950s Fund Raising

Bake Sale – July 1954 \$125.00

Variety Booth at Amboy Firemen's Charity Dinner- September 10 &11, \$70

Seal Campaign- November 1954, 1955, 1956

Pamphlets given out at fair in August 1955. Sold homemade candy at fair, August 1956 Conventions.

Members attended:

First – Cleveland at Carter Hotel – May 1955 Second-Toledo – May 1955

Third – Dayton – April 1956

Fourth-Mansfield- May 3-5, 1957

First Classes and Students

Teacher- Miss Barbara White

Students

Paula Berg, Ashtabula; Arthur Campbell, Kingsville; Daniel Custead, Ashtabula; Melanie Walker, Conneaut; Rena Hudson, Pierpont; Francis McLaughlin, Rock Creek; John Pickett, Ashtabula; Carol Sandfield, Ashtabula; Ross Scibona, Geneva; Wanda Hopkins, Conneaut; Donna Bowers, Ashtabula; Paul DiNickle, Ashtabula

Teacher- Mrs. Roger Sisson

Students

Daniel Brunell, Kingsville; Rebecca DiNickle, Ashtabula; Michael Forbes, Conneaut; Clair Fadden, Orwell; Kathy Hart, Orwell; Mary Kehoe, Conneaut; John Morano, Conneaut; Larry Moroski, Kingsville; Ralph G. Russell, Geneva; Michael Sabados, Conneaut; Arthur Bunner, Geneva

Teacher – Mrs. Dorothy Bishop

Students

Richard Bowers, Ashtabula; Wayne Copeland, Ashtabula; ----- Brown, Ashtabula; Diane Dickson, Conneaut; Virginia Gregory, Geneva Rose Mauro, Ashtabula Barbara Mauro, Conneaut; Orville Pagett, Ashtabula; Barbara Weddle, Jefferson; Dorothy Wilkison, Geneva; Nancy Freeman, Orwell; Mary Davies, Ashtabula

Teacher- Mrs. Bolmeyer

Students

June Cichy, Pierpont; Carol Horne, Ashtabula; Patricia Kapen, Jefferson; Linda Meinke, Conneaut; Daniel Morano, Conneaut; William Roux, Jefferson; Thomas Utter, Geneva; Robert Von Tesmar, Ashtabula; James Weagraff, Ashtabula; William Barrett, Ashtabula; Sharon Ann Jones, Geneva ; James Kessler, Ashtabula

## Special Story: Gene and Nadine Moroski Make a Life-Changing Parenting Decision

In 1947, Gene and Nadine Moroski had to make a life-changing decision about their new born son Larry. Doctors had diagnosed him with Downs Syndrome and they gave his grieving and confused parents the option of keeping him at home with little hope of an active intellectual life or placing him in a state institution. After the young couple's faith in a German specialist and his changing the brain theory produced no results, Gene and Nadine accepted the fact that they could not change their son's brain.

Frustrated yet determined, they decided to do something themselves to help Larry instead of leaving his fate in the hands of doctors and state institutions. They just were not sure what to do next. Then Nadine Moroski saw an advertisement in the Ashtabula Star Beacon stating that mentally retarded children could be helped and asking for interested parents to call a telephone number listed at the bottom of the advertisement. Nadine called the telephone number which belonged to the Weintz family of Geneva, and she and Gene and several other parents attended the first meeting of the future Ashtabula County Association for Retarded Citizens.

During the first few meetings, parents learned what resources district schools offered to children with developmental disabilities and mental retardation. The experts from the school districts advised the group of parents to create a board of directors with the mission of establishing services for their children. Gene explained that he visualized a school on a farm for the children to garden, care for animals, and possibly reside there – a cradle to the grave system of care. Eventually, the parents decided on a city instead of a farm model, and with the promise of donated space, they began raising funds for their school.

Nadine recalled that the parents held bake sales and sent out printed seals asking for donations for the school. They spoke at PTAs, women's groups, the Veterans of Foreign Wars, anyone willing to listen and contribute to their dream. After they earned \$1,000 they bought supplies and hired teacher Esther Bennett of Conneaut.

In a 1955 story in the Conneaut News-Herald, Gene Moroski said that Mrs. Esther Bennett was a good teacher who seemed to know instinctively what to teach special needs children. He recalled that as well as teaching students, Mrs. Bennett picked them up for school and made their lunches. Nadine said that Mrs. Bennett was a beautiful person and she didn't think that the school could have gotten

started without Mrs. Bennett. The first class of five students and their teacher Mrs. Bennett met in the basement of the First United Methodist Church in Ashtabula, in March 1955. As enrollment grew, so did the importance of naming the new school.

Nadine Moroski remembered the night in 1957 that the parents voted on a name for the school. The parent board met at the Harris Memorial Presbyterian Church and everyone submitted possible names for the school. According to the story, Nadine said “we all agreed on Happy Hearts because we thought we could make some hearts very happy.”

Several of the Board members said they chose Happy Hearts as a name because they felt it reflected the people of Ashtabula County who generously gave to any person with a disability.

In 1968, the parent board that would be renamed the Ashtabula County Board of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities successfully campaigned for a tax levy throughout Ashtabula County to build the Happy Hearts School.

Gene Moroski’s dream of cradle to the grave help for special needs children came true at Happy Hearts which offered an early intervention program for infants, classes for primary and intermediate students, and activities for adults and senior citizens at Ash/Craft Industries.

Larry Moroski, one of the original students at Happy Hearts School that his parents helped start, was one of the first students to graduate from Happy Hearts to Ash/Craft Industries. His mother said that he went to work every day “and just loves it.” Larry also participated in the Special Olympics. When Happy Hearts celebrated its 50th Anniversary in 2005, Larry, then fifty-five, and at least two of the other original students were part of the celebration.

After an active, fulfilled life made possible because of the dreams and determination of his parents, Larry died on March 15, 2010. His father played “Wooly Bully,” Larry’s favorite song, at his funeral.

## Chapter Two- Successfully Surviving The 1960s



*Two children of the Ashtabula County Child Welfare Board's Happy Hearts School take a drink during a break in their school day. David Patton and Mary- Jo Wilson enjoy the refreshing drink. November 12, 1963.*

### **Expanding and Establishing a Sheltered Workshop in the 1960s**

The Ashtabula County Council for Retarded Citizens operated Happy Hearts School until the 1960-1961 school year. In 1959, the voters of Ashtabula County passed an operating levy and the school received financial aid for the first time from Ashtabula County. In 1960, Ohio State law mandated that the Child Welfare Board supervise the community

classes and the Child Welfare Board employed a director to operate the Happy Heart's program. During the decades of the 1960s and 1970s, several classrooms, a sheltered workshop, a pre-school, and home visitor programs were added to the Happy Hearts program.



### **Moving to the Ashtabula County Children's Home**

By April 1961, the cost of operating Happy Hearts had caused a financial crisis. If it not been for the interest and generosity of the citizens of Ashtabula County Happy Hearts would have been forced to close its doors.

Employees, family, and friends of Happy Hearts successfully publicized the school's mission and its financial crisis and many community contributions helped the school finish its term.

In September 1961, Happy Hearts left its Austinburg site to move into the basement of the Ashtabula County Children's Home and the Child Welfare Board legally took over jurisdiction of the school. The school's basement quarters included four classrooms, a music room, an office, and a play area. Happy Hearts now offered four classes for its forty-eight students and their teachers were paid about \$400 a month.

Responding to the School's chronic financial problems, the Ashtabula County Commissioners approved a resolution placing a .2 tenth of a mill levy on the November 1961 ballot to operate Happy Hearts School. The Council for Retarded Citizens worked tirelessly to publicize the school and its programs, and the voters passed the levy by a wide margin. The Child Welfare Board would disperse the tax monies which would not be available until January of 1962.

Another state approved class began in February 1962, and a teacher was hired to handle the class. The state mandated that Happy Hearts teachers have a maximum class load of twelve students and it also required children attending Happy Hearts to have an IQ between 30 and 50, and be toilet trained and ambulatory. Once again, Happy Hearts School opened its new term in the basement of the Ashtabula Children's Home in September 1962. Five classes and five full-time teachers accommodated the approximately sixty students. Three aides were also hired to help with some of the classes. The Child Welfare Board purchased five small buses which began operating in November 1962.

In October 1962, the Child Welfare Board hired G. Thomas Graf of Lancaster, Ohio, as the first Director of Happy Hearts, and Mrs. Dorothy Shumake, a registered nurse from Conneaut as the first Home Visitor. Thomas Graf starred in football and wrestling at Ohio State University while earning a master's degree in special education. He conducted research in sheltered workshop development and curriculum development for the retarded child, and he also studied physical fitness for the retarded child. Dorothy Shumake's responsibilities included helping to evaluate and prepare retarded children at home for pre- school and the regular training classes at Happy Hearts.

By 1964, Director Graf had guided Happy Hearts to the number two school for the mentally retarded in the state of Ohio. He explained his philosophy for educating

mentally retarded students. “Basically, the mentally retarded child is the same as the normal child. He must feel he is wanted, loved, and important.”

He said that the mission of Happy Heart’s School was to develop social, physical, emotional, academic, and vocation abilities of all trainable mentally retarded youngsters in Ashtabula County.

According to Director Graf, not accepting their mentally retarded child for themselves and what they can accomplish is the worst mistake parents can make. He also stressed that parents should not blame themselves for mental retardation. “Anyone can have a mentally retarded child,” he said.

### 1963-The Sheltered Workshop Program Begins



*Children learn to use their hands in training and get experience in the Happy Hearts Division of Goodwill Industries. Boys show their parents how they refinish heavy plank benches for an industry. From left are Mrs. Ed Pickett, John and Orville Pickett, Larry Moroski, Mrs. Jocelyn Louys, boys’ division teacher, and Gene Moroski, retarded children advisory board*

*member. Ashtabula Star Beacon, September 12, 1964.*

Enrollment in Happy Hearts continued to grow as broadly as a parent’s hope for the future of their child, and in January 1963, one of the classes moved to Goodwill Industries to form the first Sheltered Workshop program. The boys in the Sheltered Workshop had many different jobs including cleaning plastic bags for the industry, sorting buttons, and refinishing furniture. The girls performed tasks like sorting, washing, mending, and ironing clothes.

### **New Rooms at Happy Hearts**

In 1963, Happy Hearts School established a room for a Home Economics class with a triple sink, built in cupboards, stove, refrigerator and many more conveniences to help better train children to maintain their homes in the future. The two older classes at the school had a physical education program with each class spending 45 minutes a day in the recreation room. The school also hired a school nurse who made home visits and taught a class two days a week for preschool children who would be eligible for the beginner’s class the next year.

The four school classes were given four big parties during the school year, including one at Halloween, Christmas, Valentine's Day, and Easter. Seven Council for Retarded Citizens members attended the eleventh ARC convention held in Toledo, Ohio from May 3rd to May 5th. Eunice Kennedy Shriver, sister of President John F. Kenney, spoke at the convention where Happy Hearts received an outstanding achievement award for the second-best program for retarded children in Ohio.

A May open house at Happy Hearts shared the school's progress with the citizens of Ashtabula County who helped make its program one of the best. Miss Marjorie Taft supervised a swimming program at the YM-YWCA in Ashtabula along with Thomas Graf, school director and Stephen Woitovitch, physical education director. Bowling, tumbling, marching, and dancing were also added to the physical education program.

During the summer, Happy Hearts students enrolled in swimming classes at the YM-YWCA and the Salvation Army summer program at Camp Herrick in Mentor. In September 1963, more than sixty pupils attended Happy Hearts in four full time classes and at the Ashtabula County Children's Home location. A pre-school clinic was also located in the basement.



### **Santa Visits Happy Hearts in January 1964**

On January 6, 1964, Santa made a late visit to Happy Hearts School. Three of the children thanked him for what he brought them for Christmas and he explained why he made a personal trip after instead of before Christmas.

The United Commercial Travelers Lakeshore Council #330 sponsored what had been planned as a Christmas Party until the Christmas weather turned it into an after- Christmas party. A heavy snowfall the week before Christmas snowed the children homebound and forced Santa to keep busy making toys for them in his North Pole workshop and deliver them after Christmas. Instead of telling Santa what they wanted for Christmas, Happy Hearts pupils thanked him for the toys they received for Christmas.

G. Thomas Graf, Happy Hearts Director, said the United Commercial Travelers have been "a tremendous asset to the Retarded Children's Program." He said that besides the annual Christmas Party, the UCT also provided some Happy Hearts

Teachers with full tuition scholarships to take classes in the mental retardation field.



*New officers for the Ashtabula County Association for Retarded Citizens are (from left seated) Nadine Moroski, treasurer; Charlotte Lovas, secretary; Elva Roux, vice president; and Charles Thomas, president. The officers were installed by Dr. William Hall (standing) at Happy Hearts School on January 16, 1964.*

### **1964- Camp and Statistics**

As of January 1964, 78 children were enrolled in the Happy Hearts program with twenty-eight more added during the year. A total of 102 children were served with fifteen leaving because of the age 21 limit. Others left because they moved; they remained at home; they secured part time work; or they died.

In September 1964, the state added a sixth class and hired a sixth teacher. There were seventy-two students enrolled at Happy Hearts. The Salvation Army Camp Herrick held retarded children's camp once again and many children from Happy Hearts enjoyed the seven-day camping experience.



*New teachers met for special instruction prior to the staff organizational meeting Monday at Happy Hearts School. With G. Thomas Graff, director, are (left to right) Mrs. Robert Louys, new workshop teacher in the boys 'division; Miss Betty Hartley, primary teacher; Mrs. Phil Miller, teacher aid; and Miss Elizabeth Luke intermediate class teacher. Ashtabula Star*

*Beacon, September 3, 1964.*

In 1964, Boy Scout Troop No. 24 was chartered, and Scoutmaster Joseph Urban and Assistant Scoutmaster Harry Summers introduced the boys to the scouting program. A Cub Scout Troop was established with Mrs. Elva Roux as den mother and Girl Scout Troop No. 99 formed with leader Mrs. Harold Covert and assistant leader Mrs. Myron Hudson. All of the scouts participated in the Memorial Day Parade.



## Happy Hearts Wins a State-Wide Reputation



G. Thomas Graf is the first Director of Happy Hearts School.



Mrs. Dorothy Bishop (center) teaches Home Economics.



Steve Voitovich (center) a teacher at Happy Hearts School, helps boys with their handicraft projects.

A Cleveland Plain Dealer story dated December 12, 1964, explored the success of the Happy Hearts program.

A program to help mentally retarded children become more self-sufficient is proving to be a success at Ashtabula County's Happy Hearts School in Kingsville. The program's emphasis shifted from teaching subjects like reading and writing to teaching the children personal hygiene, and how to perform simple tasks and household duties.

Because of the revised program, many pupils who formerly were totally dependent on their parents and care givers can care for themselves to varying degrees. Those who are more advanced have gone on to jobs with Goodwill Industries in Ashtabula. Parents have called the progress their children have made “almost miraculous.”

“We have found there is little to gain in spending years teaching a child to memorize, for example, a third-grade reader, “said Thomas Graf, the school director. “There are more functional things they can learn and put to daily use.” Director Graf believes that the key is developing the individual assets of each child, and the Happy Hearts curriculum includes a program for the parents. In the home economics class, some children have progressed to unraveling threads. Others have learned to use the sewing machine. Others have learned to prepare simple meals and perform other kitchen tasks. Each child performs according to his or her individual capabilities.

Handicrafts, health, and physical education are taught in a like manner, with each contributing to the whole. The program is recognized as one of the best in Ohio by the State Division of Mental Hygiene. Enrollment in this session is forty-eight in the school classes, twenty-four in the Sheltered Workshop sponsored in cooperation with The Goodwill Industries, six in the Pre-School clinic, and fourteen in the Home Instruction Program, The school owns six buses to transport pupils to and from their homes throughout the county each day. Classes are held in the Ashtabula County Children’s Home in Ashtabula.

Last November 3, the voters in Ashtabula County passed a .2 mill levy that will provide \$65,000 annually toward Happy Heart’s \$100,000 budget. The rest is paid by the state and in tuition from the school districts where the children reside.

“The public schools cannot take an average student and make him an Einstein or a genius no more than we can take a retarded child and make him normal,” Director Graf said. “But we can help him to attain his potential to live a useful life.”

The 1965 guidelines for Happy Hearts School enrollment included an age range between 6-18 years old and an IQ range between 25 and 54. Both teachers and children had to pass the muster of the Ohio State Department of Mental Hygiene. The Happy Heart’s curriculum featured language development, health and safety education, manual training, academic subjects, and home economics. In November 1965, the current Happy Hearts enrollment numbered sixty-five children: forty-eight in the school, twelve in the sheltered workshop, and five in kindergarten.

## **Director Graf Resigns and Wayne G. Reese Continues Push for New School Building**

Before his resignation from Happy Hearts in 1965, G. Thomas Graf prepared a building study and presented it to the Child Welfare Board as it became more apparent that Happy Hearts School needed better quarters. Director Graf resigned in August 1965 to accept a position in Atlanta, Georgia, with the Retarded Children's Program.

On September 7, 1965, Wayne G. Reese became director of Happy Hearts and continued to make plans for a new building for Happy Hearts School. As of September, 19 children were enrolled in the home visitation program, six in the pre-school, and forty-eight students from age five to 18 years in the school program. The Sheltered Workshop served 26 students age 18 and over and Goodwill Industries added a second workshop class. A new physical education director was hired and an over twenty-one class organized.

## **1966-Plans for a Permanent Home for Happy Hearts**

May was a busy month for Happy Hearts, for the Ashtabula County Council for Retarded Citizens, and Happy Hearts students and teachers. Six Council Members and Happy Hearts Director Wayne Reese attended the 14th ARC convention in Columbus from May 5-8th. Many Happy Hearts pupils attended the Salvation Army Camp Herrick in the summer and Happy Hearts held a Summer Recreation program for two days a week in July with twenty-four children attending. Physical education students and their director also presented a gym show at the school. In the fall of 1966, Happy Hearts focused on acquiring funds for a new school building.

## **Blue Notes**

In October 1962, the Child Welfare Board hired G. Thomas Graf of Lancaster, Ohio, as the first Director of Happy Hearts, and Mrs. Dorothy Shumake, a registered nurse from Conneaut as the first Home Visitor

## The Geneva Free Press Endorses Bond Issue for Happy Hearts



Vote 'Yes' for Happy Hearts Bond Issue  
Geneva Free Press, October 31, 1966

The mentally retarded child deserves the same opportunities in public education as the normal child.

It has taken Americans a long time to come around to this viewpoint, and Ashtabula County can take pride in the fact its program for the retarded is among the best in Ohio; that in fact, Happy Hearts School has been a pioneer venture both in its inception as a privately supported facility and in the successful efforts of its mentors in making it tax-supported,

The devotion of a small group of parents, ministers and others concerned with brightening the future for these exceptional children was rewarded several years ago when countians overwhelmingly endorsed an operating levy. They no longer had the need to go begging at service clubs and businesses for donations. They no longer had to conduct endless rounds of bake and candy sales. The tax money permitted the hiring of a director, the best teachers available and improved teaching aids and other equipment. The money, however, could not be used for building.

And today, enrollment having mounted steadily, the school has outgrown its quarters in the basement of the Children's Home at Ashtabula – quarters far from ideal when first occupied but representing a vast improvement over facilities formerly housing the school. These were educational rooms at two churches and abandoned former elementary buildings at Austinburg and Kingsville.

Voter approval of a \$670,000 bond issue this Nov. 8 would provide funds for construction of a school building designed for the special needs of these special pupils. It would be all on one floor and have ramps instead of steps in certain critical areas.

Bids were accepted for the \$525,000 structure to be located in Kingsville Township in front of the County Home on Route 84. Plans for the new building included a gymnasium, a shop, a cafeteria, and about twelve classrooms for the over one hundred pupil student body. The bond issue would be paid off at the

average rate of .133 mill per year over a 22-year period. The cost to the average residential homeowner would be under eighty cents. The issue should receive the wholehearted endorsement of all Ashtabula Countians.

In November 1966, Ashtabula and Ashtabula County voters passed the Happy Hearts Bond Issue.

### **1967-Ground Breaking and a New Board**

Happy Hearts experienced heart and house warming events in 1967. School again opened at the Children's Home for all the children except those in the Sheltered Workshop who attended classes at the Manpower Training Center on Jefferson Road. The Pre-School clinic was dropped for lack of space, but plans were made to reestablish it in the new school.

In March 1967, Happy Hearts started using the former manpower training building as a training center with Director Wayne Reese as supervisor.

Ground breaking ceremonies were held for the new Happy Hearts School off Route 84 in Kingsville in July and Buckeye Masonry and Construction Company of Jefferson began to erect the new Happy Hearts School.

Happy Hearts School and its students and staff had called many places home since its first home at the First Methodist Church on Elm Avenue in Ashtabula in 1955.

These homes included:

First Happy Hearts class held in basement of the Elm Avenue Methodist Church in Ashtabula.

Christian Education Building at Harris Memorial Presbyterian Church in Ashtabula.

Little school building in Kingsville on School Street.

Austinburg Grade School Building.

East Side Presbyterian Church in Ashtabula.

The basement of the Children's Home is on Route 20 in Ashtabula.

The Sheltered Workshop was located at Goodwill Industries in Ashtabula for a short time. In 1978, the Ash/Craft building was built and the sheltered workshop then moved into the new building.

On October 4, 1967, Ashtabula County Commissioners created the Ashtabula County Mental Retardation Board. Earlier, the Ohio General Assembly and Governor James Rhodes passed Senate Bill 169, which created eighty-eight county boards of mental retardation to raise funds, provide services, and support people with developmental disabilities and train and educate people to teach them. Senate Bill 169 provided alternatives to state institutions and focused on providing

retarded people with home services, work activity, and sheltered employment. It provided developmentally disabled people the opportunity to live, work, and contribute to their own communities. The state law eliminated the Child Welfare Board in Ashtabula, replacing it with the Ashtabula County Board of Mental Retardation, which would work cooperatively with the Ashtabula County Council for Retarded Citizens.

An Ashtabula Star Beacon story explained how the Ashtabula County Commissioners appointed the Ashtabula County Mental Retardation Board which would have the responsibility of administrating and operating the Happy Hearts School for Retarded Children.

The Ashtabula County Commissioners appointed Dr. David Luck, Mrs. Niles Koski and Charles Von Tesmar to the board for four-year terms and Gene Moroski and Joseph Hunter were named for two-year terms. All five were present members of the Child Welfare Advisory Board.

Probate Judge Calvin Hutchins was given the responsibility of appointing two additional members to three-year terms. The new law charged the Ashtabula County Mental Retardation Board with the administration, operation, and employment of personnel and providing facilities and equipment for training programs for mentally deficient persons. In Ashtabula County, Happy Hearts School provided this training.

The Ashtabula County Board of Mental Retardation assumed its official duties on October 25, 1967, with Wayne Reese its first Superintendent. Since then, this board has operated under three different names: The Ashtabula County Board of Mental Retardation; the Ashtabula County Board of Mental Retardation/Developmental Disabilities; and the Ashtabula County Board of Developmental Disabilities.

In January 1968, the Federal Government granted Happy Hearts School a special certificate to conduct a sheltered workshop which would be operated under the Federal Labor Wage and Hour Department. The Sheltered Workshop moved from Jefferson to the new Happy Hearts School in August.



### **Council for Retarded Children Officers Installed at Annual Dinner Meeting**

*Newly elected officers for the Ashtabula County Council for Retarded Children are (left to right) Mrs. Paul Berg; Fred Ruffo; Mrs. Paula Wilson; Mrs. Stanley Gaumer; and Dr. Edward James.*

The 1968 officers for the Ashtabula County Council for Retarded Children were elected and installed after the annual dinner meeting at Topky Memorial Chapel. The new officers took their oath accepting their new office in an installation ceremony conducted by Dr. Edward James. Installed were Dr. James, President; Fred Ruffo, Vice-President; Mrs. Stanley Gaumer, Secretary; Mrs. Paula Wilson, Treasurer; and Mrs. Paul Berg, Financial Secretary.

Joe Hunter, president, recognized and honored the past presidents who attended the dinner. They were Gene Moroski, Woodrow Utter, Mrs. Berg, and Mrs. Wilson. Unable to attend but sending letters were Winthrop Davies and Mrs. Myron Hudson.

Mr. Hunter congratulated them for the work done for the Retarded Children's Council and Happy Hearts School. He presented each one with a set of "Flaming Hope" candles made by mentally retarded persons. These candles represent just one of the many projects the mentally retarded are capable of doing. Council officers and committee chairmen gave their annual reports. These include Mrs. Henry Roux, secretary; Mrs. Berg giving the treasurer's report in the absence of Mrs. Hudson; Mrs. Hunter, Ways and Means; Mrs. Annette Giddings, membership; Mrs., Roux, Cub Scouts; Mrs. Dorothy Covert, Girl Scouts; and Joe Urban, Boy Scouts.

## **October 1967- The Training Center, and Happy Hearts Classrooms**

The Ashtabula Council for Retarded Children published a newsletter called “The Link.” The October 1967 issue reported the happenings at the Training Center, later Ash/Craft, and in the Happy Hearts classrooms.

The year 1967 had gotten off to a good start in the Training Center, with the workers enthusiastic about being trained in work habits and learning new skills. Mr. Buchtinec reported that the young men were refinishing furniture, including using stripping compound, sanding with different types of sandpaper, using steel wool and sometimes electric sanders and varnishing. They are learning the proper use of power tools like electric drills, electric sanders, and an electric buffer. The workers are also learning to wash and wax the school’s buses.

Mrs. Allds reported that the girls have been busy doing volunteer work all year. They are making diapers, pads and bandages for the Cancer Society and kit bags for the Red Cross. All of this has been good training and review in measuring, pinning, basting, and machine sewing.

Mrs. Smith highlighted a new and interesting project involving making bows for gift packages. This operation had six steps: Operating the machine that made the bow; cutting off the ribbon as each bow was completed; placing an adhesive sticker on the back of the bow; finishing by tucking ribbon on top to cover the bow pin; next, came counting and packing the bows in plastic bags and stapling the bag closed and attaching a Training Center tag.

Almost every girl and some of the boys can operate the machine, and every girl can do some part of the operation. Approximately five thousand bows have been made in the past three weeks! With all of this activity going on and much more planned, we have great hopes for the future of our Training Center.

### **Mrs. Dorothy Bishop – Departmental Classes- Home Economics**

*Mrs. Dorothy Bishop teaches Happy Hearts pupils the art of cooking and homemaking.*

*Twenty-four girls and boys learn kitchen skills in her classes.*





We are all happy to be back in our kitchen classrooms and have started this year with four new girls and five new boys in our classes. This leaves us fifteen boys and girls with former experience in our Home Economics activities. We all ironed our own aprons and have started to review cooking skills. Both classes have made Kool-Aid which gives such good practice in measuring, stirring, and pouring. Both classes have made Jell-O, again a lesson in measuring, stirring, and serving. We have started on our turns at dishes and are trying to keep the tea and coffee cups very clean. Everyone has had a chance to assemble and operate the sweeper, and we will sweep the various strips of carpeting around school.

Sewing is under way with a finished pincushion in almost every box. Our new students are doing very well. Many have finished a potholder for our kitchen, and various felt animals have been started. We are having practice on the sewing machines and will be stitching soon.

The change of season always brings out lots of conversation and awareness of the beauties around us. We have been working on swimming terms and words, and our functional words like ON, OFF, and DANGER. For our pillows and animals, we continue to need nylon hose and count on our friends to send them in. We can also use left-over pieces of new material. The girls' class was very pleased to win the September award of \$2.00 for the best parent attendance at the Council meeting. The money was spent on a new record of songs that we enjoy very much and a hammer for our room so we don't have to borrow one. Many thanks.

### **Miss Aili Hokkanen- Department Classes-Arts and Crafts**



*Baubles, bows, ribbons, and paper flowers adorn the colorful, handmade Easter bonnets that the older girls of Happy Hearts School made for Easter. Home Economics Teacher Mrs. Dorothy Bishop assisted Arts and Crafts teacher, Miss Aili Hokkanen in helping the girls make their bonnets. (First row) Frances Mudenhalf; Sandra Carpenter; Beth Fogle; Annette Bluhm; and June Cichy. (Second Row) Sharon Jones; Jane McCarthy; Carol Horne; Susan Bradley; and Patty Kapen. (Third Row, standing) Sara Smith; Karen Benton; and Shirley Lott.*

In the Arts and Crafts Department, the girls have been busy making card holder cans, string pictures, paper beads, get-well and birthday cards. They have been learning to braid. Some have worked on French Knot handwork. Bird houses have been made by means of folding papers or magazines. Papier- Mache pins were made which seemed to interest the children. Paper plate potholder containers were also made.

The boys have made macaroni covered banks and ash trays. They have made pictures by means of blowing paint through straws. It is amazing how lovely the results were. Cutting paper and making paper beads from wallpaper and construction paper also took place. At the present time, the boys are making napkin holders. They made Papier-Mache brooches. These boys have also been learning to fold the sheets of Reader's Digest books to form bird houses.

Cutting with scissors seems to be rather difficult for these children. We are attempting to help them to learn how to do this. Perhaps it would be a good idea if the parents would allow their children to cut pictures from magazines in order to give them additional practice in cutting. They seem to enjoy cutting pictures.

Recently, Toy Boy, Mrs. Foy's poodle, and Miss Hokkanen's cat, Tupsu, were visitors at the school. The children seemed to enjoy meeting these pets.

### **1968 -Welcome Home to Stay, Happy Hearts!**



*Three students at the new Happy Hearts School helped the three County Commissioners cut the ribbon during the dedication of the new school. The children from left are David Urban, Diane Bowers, and Robert Hunter.*

*Commissioners, standing are Thomas Nassief, W.B. McCoy, and Harold Fuller. Photo: Jefferson Gazette, November 5, 1968.*

In 1968, a permanent home was completed for Happy Hearts School and Ash/Craft off Route 84 in Kingsville. An overflow crowd of more than 4,000 people attended the dedication and open house of the new Happy Hearts School, Sunday afternoon, November 3, 1968, in Kingsville. Congratulating the

community on providing the school, speaker Dr. Patrick J. Doyle, professor and chairman of the Department of Community Medicine and International Health at Georgetown University, pointed out that the only alternative to such a program was outmoded and costly institutional care. He was also a member of President Johnson's Committee on Mental Retardation from 1966-1968.

"Every effort should be made to keep the retarded child and adult in his own home and community, serving to the best of his ability," Dr. Doyle commented. "There has been nothing done in the field of mental retardation that was not started by parents," he said, emphasizing that parents needed community support in providing regional centers to give the needed special care. He stressed that each retarded child should be trained to be independent, with supportive help as needed. With the public and business community recognizing his abilities and limitations, the retarded person can be helped to utilize his talents in productive work.

Accepting the keys to the new school from Ashtabula County Commissioners, school director Wayne G. Reese, said, "It is for and with these people in mind that I accept these keys." The Commissioners, Thomas Nassief, Harold Fuller, and Walter McCoy, cut the ribbon, officially opening the school.

James White, Columbus, executive director of the Ohio Association of Retarded Children, said that this is the fifth such school in Ohio. A. Gene Moroski served as master of ceremonies. Dr. Edward J. James, president of the Ashtabula County Council for Retarded Children, welcomed all those attending. Chairman of the Ashtabula County Mental Retardation Board, Charles von Tesmar, also spoke. Mrs. E.S. McConnell, patriotic instructor of Paulus Women's Relief Corps 304, presented a flag to the new school. One member each of the Happy Hearts Boy Scout and Girl Scout troops participated in the Pledge of Allegiance. The flag used in the ceremony was presented to the school by Mary Stanley Chapter, Daughters of the American Revolution, and donated by Mrs. William Swedenborg.

The school's classrooms, training center, pre-shop, cafeteria, kitchen, gymnasium, and Ash/Craft center were open to the public until 6 p.m.



*The new gymnasium at the Happy Hearts School on South Ridge East is put to good use on the first day of classes in 1968. Boys here have picked teams and are lining up in the middle of the gym floor. At the present time, the gym is also serving as a storage room.*



*Happy Hearts students enjoy bouncing on the trampoline.*

### **Happy Hearts Holds “Meet the Teacher” Night, November 11, 1969**

Approximately seventy-five parents and friends attended the October 21, 1969 “Meet the Teacher” night held at Happy Hearts School. Wayne Reese, administrator, introduced the teachers and then parents took the place of their child in the classroom and teachers performed a mock daily schedule. Mrs. Bert Smith’s Workshop and Mrs. Gene Triozzi’s Class won the parent room count.

An Interfaith church school program is conducted every Sunday morning at 10:30 in the Fellowship Hall of First Presbyterian Church. Family swim program is set for every second and fourth Tuesday at Ashtabula County YM-YWCA from 6 to 6:45 p.m., with a small fee charged. Parents and friends were invited to participate.

Dr. Edward James remarked on promoting the tax levy program and committees. Serving on the committee were: Mrs. Stanley Gaumer, chairman; Mrs. Joseph Hunter, speakers; Mrs. Myron Hudson, posters; Mrs. Stanley Giddings, leaflets; and Mrs. Richard Robbins, publicity.

A Halloween dance was held on October 31. The youth group of the council decorated the gym and handled all arrangements. The next council meeting is scheduled for November 18 with the Reverend T. Gobel from Cleveland as guest speaker.

Parents were reminded to send in gift items to the school or take to next council meeting for the Christmas box to be sent to the Columbus State Institution. Anyone wishing to add any gifts to this box may contact the school.



Happy Hearts Superintendent Wayne Reese inspects a project in the Ash/Craft Sheltered Workshop.

## Sixties Snapshots

*Dominic Landelli, second from left, checks arrangements for a benefit dance sponsored by Knights of Columbus District 35. The dance will aid Happy Hearts School Scouting program. Looking on are Joseph Urban, Scout Master, Mrs. Myron Hudson, council president, Mrs. Eva Roux, Cub Scout leader, and Mrs. Dorothy Covert, Girl Scout leader.*



## K of C Dance Will Aid Happy Hearts Scouting

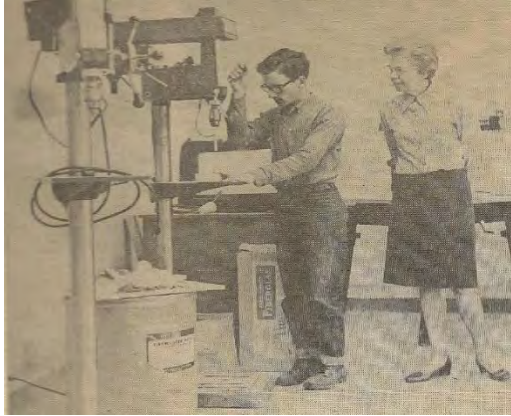
For the benefit of Happy Hearts School Knights of Columbus District 35 will sponsor a dance on June 6. Bob Billick and his orchestra will play from 10 p.m. to 2 a.m. at Skateland, North Bend Road. Refreshments will be served. District Deputy Dominic Landelli planned the dance for the newly organized Boy and Girl Scout Troops at Happy Hearts School. Although Happy Hearts School is the Institutional Representative for the Scouts, it cannot provide funds for the scouting movement since it is a tax-supported school. The Scouting program is the responsibility of the Council for Retarded Children, the official parent organization of the school. Funds will be used to purchase equipment so that 13 Boy Scouts, 11 Girl Scouts, and eight Cub Scouts may take part in the program.

*United Commercial Travelers Lake Shore Council presented scholarship checks to teachers at Happy Hearts School in September 1963. G. Thomas Graf (left),*



*director of the school stands beside Ernest Humphrey, senior counselor of the Lake Shore Council of United Commercial Travelers as he makes the awards to Mrs. Dorothy Shumake, home visitor, and Steven Voitovich, physical education teacher. Supporting projects for the mentally retarded is one of the main*

*functions of United Commercial Travelers. The local chapter has also sponsored Christmas parties for Happy Hearts School.*



*The Ash/Craft Department gives young men an opportunity to learn woodcraft and furniture refinishing. Mrs. Martha Pifer, supervisor, is assisted in the department by John Buchtiner, Gertrude Smith, and Linda Nichols.*



*Happy Hearts physical education director, Steve Weitovich, shows two youngsters the proper grip in bowling. November 16, 1963.*



*Conferring about new school concerns.*



*Official groundbreaking in 1967 for the new Happy Hearts School centering around four gold-colored shovels. Officials from the County Child Welfare Board, the Happy Hearts School Advisory Board, and county commissioners attended. With shovels are W.B. McCoy, commissioner; Miss Eleanor Jammal; Wayne Reese, school principal, commissioner Thomas Nassief and Roger Henderson, chairman. Others*

*(from left) are Mrs. Elizabeth A. Frederick, Gene Moroski, Mrs. Ruth Hill, Joseph Hunter, Matt Kujala, Lawrence Hill, and Dr. David Lusk.*



*The new Happy Hearts School on Rt. 84 east of Ashtabula was dedicated in November 1968. Dr. Patrick J. Doyle, a member of the President's Committee on Mental Retardation participated in the dedication.*



*Box after box of supplies for the new Happy Hearts school are checked by administrator Wayne Reese and Carolyn Mackey as they prepare for the opening in November 1968.*





*Students at Happy Hearts School under the direction of Steve Woitovich, instructor, and Miss Elizabeth Chaffee, Child Welfare Director, package educational pamphlets for the Ashtabula County Mental Health Association. The leaflets are for distribution to waiting rooms and offices of doctors, lawyers, dentists, beauty salons, barber shops and depots.*



*Fill up those envelopes! is the battle cry at Ashtabula's Happy Heart's School as students stuff envelopes for the annual Ashtabula County Tuberculosis and Health Association Christmas Seal Campaign. More than 10,000 envelopes containing Christmas seals and appeal letters are to be mailed this year on November 15th. Mrs. Robert Louys, Happy Hearts instructor, and Mrs. Harry Madden, executive secretary of the TB Association instruct students.*



*Teachers Mrs. Margaret Dunkin and Mrs. Jean Allds help the children stuff envelopes with Christmas Seals to be later sold for charity work. November 11, 1962.*

## Looking at Levies



*These women are working hard in the levy room at the Happy Hearts School informing voters what is at stake in the November 4 election. Standing from the left are Mrs. Duane (Flora) Roosa, Conneaut, Mrs. Helen Millspaugh Ashtabula; Mrs. Duane Mast, Conneaut; Mrs. Joseph Hunter, North Kingsville; Mrs. Myron Hudson, Pierpont. Seated from left are Mrs. Nadine Moroski, Kingsville; Mrs. Henry (Elva) Roux, Jefferson; Mrs. Stanley Giddings, Ashtabula; Mrs. Fred Ruffo, Ashtabula; and Mrs. Stanley Gaumer, Ashtabula county chairman for the Board of Mental Retardation. November 3, 1969.*

A 2/10 of a mill tax levy, state aid, and donations supported Happy Hearts School in 1966. It offered seven classes for developmentally disabled students: one class for preschoolers, ages 3- 6; four classes for students 6-18; and two workshop classes for students over eighteen. The school employed a director, seven teachers, two teacher's aides, a school clerk, secretary, eight bus drivers, and a custodian. Teachers with a degree earned \$500 a month, and those without a degree earned \$420 a month. Happy Hearts held four classes at the Children's Home, two at the Goodwill Industries, and three in the basement of the East Side Presbyterian Church in Ashtabula. Citing inadequate facilities and overcrowded conditions at Happy Hearts, the State of Ohio threatened to withdraw its aid. Happy Hearts needed to find new facilities.

## Time Line 1960s

1960

August 8, 1960. Board Member of Happy Hearts School at Austinburg, Dr. Laurence Fisher accepted a check for \$105.84 on behalf of the school from Mrs. Charles Owen and William Hall, representing the Ashtabula High School Class of 1945. The money came from extra class reunion funds.

1961

The program moved to the basement of County Children's Home. A Enrollment at 48.

Four full time teachers.

Jurisdiction of program now under Child Welfare Board (by law.)

July. Money needed for Happy Hearts School. There is still great financial need for the Happy Hearts School. The money from the tax levy will be unavailable until 1962. The school's new quarters are in the basement of the Children's Home, and a large portion of the necessary funds to remodel must be obtained by the Ashtabula County Council for Retarded Citizens. To help raise money, a Candy Booth will again be sponsored by the Council at the County Fair, August 8-12. All of the candy will be made by Council mothers and volunteers. Anyone wishing to donate candy may contact Mrs. Gene Moroski or Mrs. Charles von Tessmer.

Mrs. Delores Shoaf, Orwell, has been hired as a teacher at Happy Hearts, replacing Mrs. Roger Sisson has resigned.

Voters approved a two tenths of a mill operating levy for three years.

1962

A fifth class was started.

Five full-time teachers and G. Thomas Graf, Director, was hired.

Mrs. Dorothy Shumake, registered nurse, was hired as a home training worker.

1963

A class of young adults moved to Goodwill Industries to form "a Workshop Program."

1964

Sixth class was started.

Sixth teacher was hired.

Enrollment at 72.

1965

The present director resigned. Replaced by Wayne G. Reese.

Children's Home basement provided: four classes, one preschool class, administrative office, small multi-purpose room. Two classes were held at Goodwill to compose the Sheltered Workshop Program. Five twelve passenger buses used for transportation as well as one 20-passenger bus.

1966

The council establishes a summer recreation program. Program now located in three places: Children's Home, four classes; one pre-school class; Goodwill "Over 21" Sheltered Workshop; East Side Presbyterian Church Basement, three classes.

A seven-tenth mill bond issue passed by voters for a building. (72 per cent majority). Fleet of buses numbers seven. Site of new school selected.

1967

The passage of Senate House Bill 169 which mandated the creation of county boards of retardation. Sheltered Workshop moved to former Manpower Training Center in Jefferson. The school basketball team participated in the state tournament at Springfield. Certification for sheltered workshop issued by Federal Wage and Hour Department. Name of Ash/Craft adopted by the board of directors. Construction has begun on a new school. Ash/Craft went on an annual basis. Pre-School closed because of lack of space.

1968

Moved into new school August 1. Ash/Craft moved from Jefferson to a new school. Four young adults from the program participated in the Special Olympics in Chicago. Started Developmental Classes for school age children. Enrollment as follows: two primary classes; one intermediate class; two department classes; twenty-five trainees in Ash/Craft; Home Training; Consultant caseload at 45. Dedication of new building on November 3, 1968,

1969 Reopened preschool class. Ash/Craft increased to thirty trainees. Started a preworkshop. Present caseload: Home Services, 55; community classes, 80; Ash/Craft, 30.

## Special Story: Inez and Stanley Gaumer Make a Fateful Decision About Their Son Claude

In a 2005 Ashtabula Star Beacon story commemorating the 50th Anniversary of Happy Hearts and Ash/Craft Industries, Inez Gaumer tells the story of the beginnings of her involvement with Happy Hearts in a matter-of-fact way. “The doctors told my husband Stanley and I to put our son, Claude, in an institution and forget we ever had him,” she said. The doctors also told them that Claude, who has Downs Syndrome, would not walk, talk, or function.

After over a decade of struggle, the Ashtabula County Board of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities guided the successful passage of supporting levies and built the Happy Hearts School and Ash/Craft Industries. Shortly after Claude turned a year old, Ashtabula County voters passed an operating levy that opened new possibilities of support from the community. In 1966, Ashtabula County voters passed a levy that opened up possibilities for the future. The Board added a sheltered workshop, preschool, and home visitor programs as well as several classrooms.

Around this time, Claude Gaumer started school at Happy Hearts. His mother is tremendously satisfied with his Happy Hearts education. “His Happy Hearts Education has helped him tremendously in his development,” Inez said. “We’ve always had such a dedicated staff who really care about their students and clients,” she said.

In 1966, the voters of Ashtabula County approved a bond issue for the construction of a new school building. The Kingsville Township location of Happy Hearts and Ash/Craft permanently opened its doors in 1968.

By the 2005 50th Anniversary Celebration, the list of services that Happy Hearts and Ash/Craft offered included bus transportation, hot breakfasts, and lunch, physical, speech and occupational therapies, adaptive physical education, academic learning and self-care skills, a full-time nurse, Early Intervention, five satellite locations, and support services. For the early students, now adults, Ash/Craft Industries has become a way for them to continue to learn and truly be productive.

“The program gives back to the community, the clients spend their paychecks here, and there is a real production of goods being made and grown,” Inez Gaumer said. Claude Gaumer , now grown older, walks, talks and loves his work at Ash/Craft.

He participates in the Special Olympics where he plays softball, runs track, bowls every Saturday and is an excellent swimmer. He also likes to arm wrestle.



*No Crooks Here. Ashtabula County Sheriff William Johnston arm wrestles with Claude Gaumer from Happy Hearts School during the Happy Hearts Ashcraft/Christmas party held at the Elks Lakefront Lodge 208 on Lake Road on December 18, 1986. The Elks Lodge, sheriff's department, Joe Lovas Insurance and Mike's Farm Market helped to make the party a success for the more than 250 who attended. Ashtabula Star Beacon photograph by Jim Matthews.*

### Blue Notes

The Ashtabula County Board of Mental Retardation assumed its official duties on October 25, 1967, with Wayne Reese its first Superintendent

In 1966, the voters of Ashtabula County approved a bond issue for the construction of a new school building. The Kingsville Township location of Happy Hearts and Ash/Craft permanently opened its doors in 1968

## Chapter Three: Soaring Through The 1970s



*The new administration of the Ashtabula County Council for Retarded Citizens assumed their duties of office. Fred Ruffo, (seated), Mrs. Kathleen Crofoot, Mrs. Myron Hudson, Mrs. James Theiss and Mrs. Stanley Gaumer are installed by Dr. Edward James (right) past president. January 22, 1970.*

Happy Hearts School and Ash/Craft Industries achieved many new programs and services for developmentally disabled people and their families during the 1970s. A hot lunch program provided nourishing meals, a fleet of thirteen school buses transported students, and a summer camp program provided them with new learning experiences during the summer.

Expanded nursing, speech therapy, and psychological services aided pupils and their families and infant stimulation classes helped the youngest pupils begin their journey through Happy Hearts. Home training services reached out to children and adults unable to attend the on-site Happy Hearts classes.

The Ohio Department of Education chartered Happy Hearts School as a validation of the quality and effectiveness of its programs and the dedication and hard work of its now nearly one hundred employees.

In the 1970s, ARC spearheaded the development of a long-range commitment to establishing local residential facilities, and by 1975, it had raised and donated a total of \$5,000.00 towards establishing the first group home for men, Maples I in

Kingsville.

In 1970, Scoutmaster Joe Urban's Boy Scouts received an award and citation for their booth at the Scout-A-Rama. The Girl Scouts and Cub Scouts were struggling to find volunteer leaders.

At the Ashtabula Council for Retarded Citizens meeting rooms, awards were given for the most parents present at ARC meetings.

On February 19, 1970, 92 Happy Hearts Students enjoyed hot lunches. Mrs. Louys was paid a salary of \$300 for leading a summer recreation program every Tuesday and Thursday for six weeks, while counselors were paid \$15 per week. In July 1970, 13 children won 16 medals at the Special Olympics in Cleveland. In



November, 102 people, sixty-three of them parents, attended Walk in Your Child's Shoes night.

### **Ashtabula County Teachers of the Trainable Retarded**

*Officers for the 1971-1972 school year for the Association of Ashtabula County Teachers of the Trainable Retarded are*

*(from left) Miss Betty Hartley, treasurer; Mrs. Vincent Bishop, Vice President Russell Grippi, president and Miss Alice R. Lange, secretary.*

### **Mrs. Bishop is President**

Officers for the 1972-1973 year of the Association for Ashtabula County Teachers of the Trainable Retarded are Mrs. Vincent Bishop, president.

Miss Betty Hartley, vice president; Mrs. Byron Johnson, secretary; and Miss Denise Davis, treasurer.

The mission of the Association, now in its fifth year, is to enrich the program for the retarded and to increase the knowledge and understanding of the staff through in-service training. Committees for the coming year include Miss Davis; Miss Aili Hokkanen and Mrs. Russell Bidwell, social activities; Mrs. Michael Howland;



Robert McCartney and Miss Rosemary Kennedy, ways and means; Miss Alyce Lange; Russell Grippi; Carl Schwartz, and Mrs. Gene Triozzi, professional growth. Miss Hartley; Mrs. Peter Bennett and Mrs. Johnson, program development. Mrs. Joseph Seaman; Miss Judy Albert; and Miss Susan Kennedy, public relations and Mrs. Bennett and Miss Kennedy, work benefits. The Program Development Committee is planning a series of meetings for the discussion of particular children and ways of satisfying their special needs.

### **Mrs. Inez Gaumer Heads Council**

January 22, 1971

Ashtabula County Council for Retarded Children convened Tuesday at Happy Hearts School for election and installation of officers. Mrs. Stanley Gaumer will act as council president, assisted by Mrs. Joseph Hunter, vice president; Mrs. James Theiss, secretary; Mrs. Bruno Kohowski, financial secretary; and Mrs. Myron Hudson, treasurer.

Officers for 1970, Fred Ruffo; Mrs. Gaumer; Mrs. Theiss; and Mrs. Hudson gave yearly reports. Chairmen of standing committees are Mrs. Hunter; Mrs. Stanley Giddings; Mrs. Gaumer; Mrs. Kohowski; Francis Barrett and Joseph Urban. A white elephant and bake sale will be conducted February 6 and 7 at the garage sale at St. Joseph School.

### **Ashtabula Countians Attend State Convention**

*May 18, 1971*

*(Seated right to left) Mrs. Nadine Moroski; Mrs., Stanley Gaumer, president of the Ashtabula County Council for Retarded Children; and Mrs. Joseph Hunter attended the state convention in Columbus. (Standing) Wayne Reese, Happy Hearts School Director and Dr. Edward James also attended.*

Several members of the Ashtabula Council for Retarded Children attended the 19th Annual Ohio Association Retarded Children state convention last Thursday through



Sunday in Columbus. The program reflected issues of national, state, and local scope and was geared to the parent volunteers as well as teachers, counselors, and other professionals.

Dr. Edward James of Ashtabula, chairman of the nominating committee, submitted their selection to the members at a business meeting Sunday. Walter F. Schoenig, Cleveland, was reelected president. Delegate and alternate respectively to the convention were Mrs. Stanely Gaumer, Ashtabula, and Mrs. Joseph Hunter, North Kingsville.

Others attending from Ashtabula County were Wayne Reese, director of Happy Hearts School; Mr. Hunter, chairman of the Mental Retardation Board; Mrs. Paul Berg, Ashtabula; Mrs. Nadine Moroski, Kingsville; and Francis Barrett, Ashtabula.



### **Happy Hearts Adds to Staff**

*(Seated) Miss Diana Jones; Mrs. James Cusano; Mrs. John Watson; and (standing) Mrs. Shirley Mossford; Miss Faye Layman; Mrs. Wilbert Tormala all of Ashtabula; and Wayne G. Reese discuss the coming school year on September 29, 1971.*

There are now nine buses covering the entire county and two new drivers new this year are Mrs. John Watson, Conneaut; and Mrs.. James Cusano, Ashtabula. The school opened with 105 students in Happy Hearts classes and fifty-six clients in the adult program including Ash/Craft Sheltered workshop and the Adult Activity Center.

Home training services are extended to thirty-five additional families, said Wayne G. Reese, administrator.

All students and clients are being tested and screened this month in the areas of speech, language, and hearing by a professional team from the Montgomery Institute of Akron.

W.H. Searcy, county school superintendent, was welcomed as a new member of the Ashtabula County Board of Mental Retardation at the August board meeting.

### **Happy Hearts Students Stuff TB Yule Seals**



**October 1971**

The pre-workshop class at Happy Hearts School places the Christmas Seals in the envelopes in the last step of preparation for mailing to 20,000 persons throughout the county. This sale of Christmas Seals is the means of financial support for the Ashtabula County Tuberculosis and Health Association.

Under the direction of Carl Schwartz, the class places three sheets of stamps, the return envelope and the letter in the envelope making certain that the address label is visible through the window. This process is on an assembly line basis and it is going much faster than last year," Mr. Schwartz said. "This is the student's first chance to do something for someone else or some organization."

### **Sale Proceeds Will Benefit Happy Hearts School October 29, 1971**

Ashtabula County Council for Retarded Children  
Ashtabula County Council for Retarded Children will sponsor a bazaar and bake sale November 11 and 12 at Happy Hearts School.

Mrs. Burt Smith, Ways, and Means Chairman announced plans for the event at a

recent council meeting. She also reported on the proceeds from the fall dance which benefited the school. Each member of the teaching staff and all bus drivers of Happy Hearts School received a check from the council. The checks are to be used for additional or special equipment or supplies needed in the classrooms or on the buses.

Mrs. Stanley Gaumer, president, announced that the council will host the North East Regional Conference of the state association on November 20 at the school. The all-day affair will be attended by delegates and members of other councils for the retarded in sixteen counties in the area

The Council sponsors monthly dances for the clients of Ash/Craft and students of the upper-level classes. The Majestic furnished music for the costume dance held Thursday. Area junior and senior high school students interested in assisting at these dances and other functions can contact Mrs. Gaumer.

### **Basket Ball Uniforms and School Colors**

Winning selections in the colors and name contest for the school basketball team were announced. The team's name will be "Road Runners" selected by Dan Custead and team colors navy and light blue selected by Brian Lockett.



*Savings account awards are presented by Warren Andrews (right) Ashtabula County Savings & Loan Co. executive vice president and secretary to Daniel Custead (center) and Brian Lockett, standing in front of his father, Purnell Howard. The two won a Happy Hearts School basketball team name and color contest.*

Mr. Custead chose the name "Roadrunners" and Brian selected team colors of navy and light blue. Uniforms are provided through the Ashtabula County Council for Retarded Children. A special game to which the public is invited will be held at the

school. November 15, 1971. Members chosen to serve on the nominating committee were Fred Ruffo, chairman, Mrs. Nadine Moroski, and Mrs. Harry Church. They are to report their nominations for 1972 officers at the next meeting, November 16 at 8 p.m. at the school.

Mrs. Henry Roux announced a need for volunteers for scoutmaster and den mothers for Cub Scouts. Anyone interested can contact Mrs. Roux of Jefferson or the school.



A film showing living conditions at state institutions for the mentally retarded was viewed by members. This 15-minute film, produced and narrated by Dave Patterson, a Cleveland newsman, is being purchased by the council and will be available for showing to any club or organization.

In 1972, the Council purchased basketball uniforms for the “Roadrunners,” the Happy Hearts basketball team. To address a need for seating during basketball games and other sports events, the Council purchased bleachers for the gym. In keeping with an ongoing commitment to a Special Olympics Program each year. Council sponsored students and purchases Olympics shirts for participants.

The February 1972 issue of *The Link*, published by the Ashtabula County Council for Retarded Children, features the report of President Inez Gaumer. In one section President Gaumer mentioned the projects that the Council funded for the year, which included deck and fencing for the swimming pool used for the summer recreation program. The council paid the registration for members attending the ARC Convention, and for the Scoutmaster and adult leaders attending camp Stigwandish as well as half of the fee for any student attending either Camp Herrick or Camp Stigwandish. The Council also purchased two table tennis tables for the Sunday afternoon family recreation and two sections of bleachers for the gymnasium.

President Gaumer also noted that in 1972 the 169 Board (Ashtabula County Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities Board) took over the Summer Recreation Program. The Summer Recreation Program originated with the

Ashtabula County Council for Retarded Children in 1966 and the Council maintained it for six years. The availability of bus transportation made it possible for more students to attend last year. “It is my hope that this much needed and valuable program continues and improves each year,” she added.



### **Students Build and Race Cars**

A different Mari-Jo Wilson from the little girl on the front cover of the book races her car in the Pinewood Derby.

Twenty-one students at Happy Hearts School, ages 12 through 16, participated in a Pinewood Derby in the spring. Each student built a miniature car, following

construction from basic sanding, cutting, and painting of the wood to gluing and wheel fitting.

Judges for the event were Wayne G. Reese, administrator; Howard Dunlavy; and James Conroy. Presenting prizes was Jim Kanicki, defensive tackle for the New York Giants. Mari-jo Wilson (left) is the little girl on the cover of the book.

### **Nadine Moroski Attends the Convention**

The May 1973 edition of *The Link*, the newsletter of the Ashtabula County Council for Retarded Children reported that thirteen Council members attended the twenty-first annual convention of the Ohio Association for Retarded Children. Several of them gave reports about the workshops they attended, including Membership Chairwoman Nadine Moroski. She attended the workshop on Accreditation Standards for Residential Facilities. Mrs. Joanne Sidles was chairperson and speakers were Ted Taylor of the Joint Commission on Accreditation; Dr. Roger Gove, Commissioner of Mental Retardation & Developmental Disabilities of Columbus; and Susan Turner of the Office of Developmental Disabilities and Coordinator of Residential Facilities for the State of Ohio.

Nadine wrote in her meeting report that “the gist of the remarks made at the meeting was that all these people were anxious to work toward meeting these

standards. I have had a copy of these standards for over a year, and you should read them to realize how we are being put on about what should or should not be done.”

She wrote, “I recommend a generous amount of common sense and a reading of the Record in the Residential Newsletter as edited by Mrs. Eleanor Elkins. “I think she can bring us down to earth on what to do and what not to do. This accreditation Gobble de Gook is for a later date. How ridiculous can you get in regard to obtainable goals? If we can inject some improvement in our institution situation and communal living, maybe we can go on from there.”

### **MR/DD Board Adopts 1976 Budget**

In December 1975, the Ashtabula County Mental Retardation (169) Board adopted a budget for 1976 that was 20 per cent higher than the current budget, increasing from \$650,313 to \$782,558. The new budget included establishing an adult services director and three other staff members in that area, developing an infant stimulation program, and adding \$8,000 for four buses.

Another added cost in the new budget is school participation in a residential services program. The adult services director would be in charge of all adult programs. “We feel the adult program will expand fairly rapidly in the next few years. We want to achieve the hiring of a director in the near future,” director Dr. William Hall said.

Patrick Martin, a field representative for the Ohio Association of Public-School Employees, asked to be recognized as representing non-certified personnel at Happy Hearts School in upcoming labor negotiations. According to Dr. Hall, the people Martin wanted to represent were bus drivers, custodians, secretaries, workshop specialists and cooks. He said that the 169 Board would have to consult its lawyers, the county prosecutor, and the county commissioners before it could rule on Mr. Martin’s request. The County Commissioners must approve the 169 Board’s new budget.

The Board received a request focused mainly on teacher and teacher-aide salaries from the two groups, but Dr. Hall said that the Board had not yet received a package from the non-certified group. Board chairman Edward Lawler named a panel of three board members to analyze the teachers’ proposal and meet with the teachers to see what could be worked out. According to Dr. Hall, the beginning

salary for a certified teacher with a BA degree now at Happy Hearts School is



\$8,100 a year. “We feel the salary schedule is competitive now,” he said.

### **Celebrating the Bicentennial**

*Program Committee for the Happy Hearts*

*School Bicentennial Open House has finalized arrangements for the event to be held in the school cafeteria. Participating in the organizing of the program were (from left) Mrs. Helen Millspaugh, Miss Aili Hokkanen, Mrs. Vincent Bishop, Mrs. Orpha Smith, who designed bonnets for the children and Mrs. Walter S. Foy. Entertainment, refreshments, baked goods, craft items, plants and other features are planned.*



### **Mrs. Gertrude Smith, Happy Hearts Workshop Supervisor Retires**

October 22, 1977

Mrs. Gertrude Smith

“Once you work with retarded persons you never forget it. It is part of your life,” Mrs. Gertrude Smith said thoughtfully. Still recovering from a heart attack she had last spring, she cited health concerns as the reason for her retirement as Workshop Supervisor at Happy Hearts School.

During her eleven years as Workshop Supervisor, Mrs. Smith supervised about sixty “clients” who performed jobs which Happy Hearts subcontracted through area business, including EMCO; Wheaton, Inc.; Rockwell International; and Advanced Technology Corporation. According to Mrs. Smith, when she took over her job as Workshop Supervisor in 1967 the client payroll totaled \$562 dollars for thirty-six people.

When she retired, the payroll had grown to \$29,800 and her client list had almost doubled. She credited donations from Larry Brunner; WEK Industries; Brunell



Foam; Joe Kray; Conley's; and the Altrusa Club for helping her grow the Workshop clients and payroll as quickly as she did. She also credited her son, John Buchtinec, who recently retired after ten years as head of job procurement at Happy Hearts. "He really helped," she said. "I used to go and ask company managers for work, but when I mentioned Happy Hearts, they would say 'I already gave.' John had a different approach. He would walk through the plant with the managers and tell them what we could do for them."

The five workshop instructors bus Happy Hearts clients to their jobs from all corners of Ashtabula County and besides doing work for local industries they also do maintenance work at the North Kingsville Village Park and municipal building, maintain a greenhouse on Stevens Road, and make crafts to sell at the Ashtabula County Fair.

Mrs. Smith has total responsibility for the greenhouse crews, the workers pushing mowers in North Kingsville, and those working at the Workshop. "I'm checking on them all of the time," she said.

Commenting on the quality of her clients, Mrs. Smith firmly stated that once an employer hired a mentally retarded worker, they would not want another person working for them. "They really put out hard," she explained.

Laughter and applause accompanied Mrs. Smith as she opened each gift and card from her sixty clients at her retirement party. Then everyone lined up and hugged and kissed her. Some cried as they wished her good luck and tried to say how much they would miss her.

Smiling and hugging them in return, Mrs. Smith assured each person she would miss them as much as they would miss her. When the last client left to catch the bus home, Mrs. Smith sat with her crushed corsage, crumbled from the many hugs, and kisses her clients gave her. Wiping her red, tear-swollen eyes, she said, "They really got to me. You just cannot explain how rewarding it is."

Mrs. Smith's retirement plans included keeping the books for her son who owned Fat Alberts Pizza and the J.D. Beauty Shop.

## Ash/Craft Incorporates and Expands, 1978



Ash/Craft Industries, Inc.

The Sheltered Workshop affiliated with Happy Hearts School eventually became Ash/Craft Industries and over the years continued to grow as the adult developmentally disabled population grew and Happy Hearts School graduated more pupils ready for the next step in their careers and lives.

In 1975, the Ashtabula County Board of Mental Retardation formulated plans for a new Ash/Craft building and construction on the new building began in the spring of 1977.

In March 1978, Ash/Craft Industries incorporated as a non-profit corporation with the mission of providing habitation services and sheltered employment to moderately or severely retarded or developmentally disabled adults 16 years of age and older from Ashtabula County. As part of the Ashtabula County Board of Mental Retardation, the Ash/Craft program worked to provide each adult the opportunity to reach his or her fullest physical, social, and vocational potential.

Ash/Craft Industries Incorporated and began operating in the 20,000 square foot facility designed to provide habitation services and sheltered employment to approximately two hundred students. The building included a spacious work area, an auto bus garage, adult activity center, an area to practice daily living skills and hygiene, a multi-purpose room and cafeteria and a general office area. The professional staff evaluated each Ash/Craft person for individual abilities and needs and wrote and maintained individual plans with the goal of helping each person to live a more fulfilling, rewarding, and self-sufficient life.



*On March 25, 1978, Dr. William Hall, (left) Superintendent of the Ashtabula County Board of Mental Retardation and Larry Korland, Adult Services Director, look out of the new Ash/Craft building's activity room windows at the soon to be landscaped area of the new facility.  
Ashtabula Star Beacon photo by Barb Vancheri.*

The Ashtabula County Board of Mental Retardation, the Ash/Craft /Board of Directors, and the Ohio Division of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities established guidelines for Ash/Craft operations. The Advisory Board, now called the Ash/Craft Board of Directors, was originally formed under the charter of the Local Parents Organization.

Richard Wehler, Springfield attorney and trustee of the National Association for Retarded Citizens, spoke at the September 10, 1978, dedication of Ash/Craft Industries, Inc. The brother of a mentally retarded citizen, Attorney Wehler was a past president of the board of trustees for the Ohio Association for Retarded Citizens and a former member of the Clark County Board of Mental Retardation and the Clark County Council for Retarded Citizens.

Dedication Program

Ash/Craft Industries,

Inc. September 10,

1978

1:30 p.m.-3:00 p.m.

Welcome and Introduction...Joseph Lovas, Jr., Chairman, Ash/Craft Board

Master of Ceremonies.... Joseph Lovas, Jr.

Invocation...Rev. Robert B. Breckenridge

Presentation of Flag, Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 943

Acceptance of Flag.... Joseph Lovas, Jr.

Pledge of Allegiance.... Happy Hearts Boy Scout Troop 24

Remarks.... Edward Lawler, Chairman, Ashtabula County Mental Retardation Board

Presentation of Keys.....County Commissioners

Acceptance of Keys...Dr. William T. Hall,

Superintendent Larry Korland, Director Adult Services

Introduction of Dedicatory Speaker.... Mrs. Stanley

Gaumer

Dedication Address.... Richard H. Wehler

Benediction.... Rev. Paul Tobin

Ribbon Cutting.... County

Commissioners Open House,3:00-6:00

p.m.

In 1979, a year after the construction and dedication of the new Ash/Craft facility, noteworthy events continued to happen. Workers built a new greenhouse at Ash/Craft and eager clients began their planting duties. Art teacher Aili Hokkanen retired in May and Dr. James Hall retired in September.

Dr. Douglas Burkhardt accepted the job of superintendent of the Board of Mental Retardation and the Board named Inez Gaumer Mother of the Year and Governor James Rhodes presented her with a certificate of recognition for her distinguished services. The Kingsville Lions Club created a Leo Club for Ash/Craft workers and eleven buses transported 250 clients to their work stations at Ash/Craft Industries where eighty staff members assisted them.

## **Happy Hearts Employees to Vote on Union Representation**

On April 20, 1979, the Ashtabula County Board of Mental Retardation (169 Board) voted to have Happy Hearts School and Ash/Craft employees decide whether or not have union representation through an election at a recent board meeting. The Board feels that an election is the most democratic way to poll employees, although those opposed have labeled the proposed election as “redundant” and a method for stalling contract negotiations.

The Board also approved an across-the-board seven percent salary increase for employees. Betty Hartley, President of the Ashtabula County Employee Association for the Mentally Handicapped, said that it is the salary increase that infuriates the Association members. “The Board is saying through the increase that ‘We don’t want to negotiate with you, but we’ll give you seven percent,’” said Miss Hartley. The increase passed at Monday night’s meeting is retroactive to January 1st. Effective on September 1st, all employees will move up one increment on the salary schedule.

Since November 1978, the Association has contended it represents the majority of Happy Hearts Trainable Mentally Retarded School employees. The Employee Association subscribes to the Ohio Education Association (OEA) and OEA UniServ Consultant Becky Huddle will negotiate a contract on the employee’s behalf if the Board recognizes OEA.

Before Monday’s salary hike, employees worked under a January 1978 salary agreement between Happy Hearts School superintendent Dr. William Hall and employees.

Association for the Mentally Handicapped President Betty Hartley said that salary is not the prime concern of the employees. The Board also approved an across-the-board seven percent salary increase for employees. “We want closer communication between staff and Board,” she explained. The Association could certify that the majority of teachers, teacher’s aides, and Workshop Specialists have or will join UniServ. “An election seems a little redundant,” she added. “We don’t understand why the Board is so hesitant to let us represent these people right now.”

UniServ Consultant Becky Huddle, who has been monitoring the Board hedges on time needed for conducting an election because it is stalling, she added. “The people weren’t too happy with either move,” she said. According to Association President Hartley, the pay increase could be the Board’s attempt to show

employees that a union is not needed. The location of the election is at the Board's discretion, and this could also work to the Association's disadvantage.

"I believe we would make every attempt to have the election held so it would be as convenient as possible for employees," she said.

The Board was in a difficult position prior to the salary increase," said Dr. Hall. "If no increase were granted, there would be unhappy employees. Those say that since the increase was granted the Board has ulterior motives. Certainly, no one is looking for any kind of confrontation. The Board is trying to do what is best for the program, employees, and community."

President Hartley said she honestly believes the Board is doing what it feels is best for the school and children. "I have been here 15 years and I enjoy working here. People work here because they love the children and not for the money."

### **Looking at Levies**

January 30, 1974

Ashtabula County voters will face a five-year operating levy for Happy Hearts School due to action taken today by County Commissioners. Meeting with Commissioners were Joseph Hunter, County Board of Mental Retardation; and Acting Happy Hearts Administrator, James J. Conroy.

Conroy said the Mental Retardation Board voted last week to place a five-year, 1.4 mill operating levy on the May ballot, based on a projected 90 per cent increase in expenses over the next five years. Half of the millage in effect would be a renewal of the seven tenths mill levy which expired in December, he said. The remaining half would help offset increasing costs.

Enrollment at Happy Hearts now is 193 in the facility built for 200 maximum. Conroy said the school actually is operating at full capacity because of an uneven breakdown of age and curriculum groups. He said national figures indicate enrollment could be as high as four hundred for an area the size of Ashtabula County. Conroy said private homes in the area now are serving retarded individuals from other counties, placing additional burdens on the facility. He emphasized that Ashtabula County receives full reimbursement for such persons, and the Mental Retardation Board has a policy of refusing to accept students from outside areas unless funding is available.

Commissioner Tom Nassief said he supports the operating levy, but he cautioned

the Board against “asking the people of Ashtabula County to dig into their pockets to support the people of other counties.” He said the county should not have to raise funds for new buildings at the facility because outsiders had created the need to expand. At the same time, though, he emphasized his support for the May operating levy.

### **Happy Hearts Levy Passes, 3 to 1**

November 7, 1979

It was a landslide victory Tuesday for the only county-wide victory Tuesday for the only county-wide issue in the election.

The proposed 1.33 mill operating levy placed on the ballot by the Ashtabula County Board of Mental Retardation passed by a 12,000-vote margin, with the final tally standing at 19,583 to 6,741.

The 1.33 continuing mill will be used to pay current expenses of Happy Hearts School and Ash/Craft Industries, Inc.

Happy Hearts on South Ridge East is a public school, currently enrolling 125 exceptional students. Ash/Craft, 5959 Green Road, is an adult sheltered workshop for the physically and mentally handicapped. About twenty-five people are employed there.

As a renewal levy, the 1.33 mills will generate about two-thirds of the board’s total expenditures for the year.

### **Happy Hearts Sparks Hope**

A May 4, 1974, letter to the editor summarized what Happy Hearts School meant to parents of special needs children and the children themselves.

Editor, Star-Beacon,

Thirteen years ago, we like the parents of every 33rd baby born in Ashtabula County, heard the heartbreaking words:

“I wish there were a way to soften this blow for you. Your child suffers from Down’s-Syndrome, more commonly known as Mongolism. He will never be much more than a “vegetable.” My best advice is to put him in an institution and forget you ever had him.”

Those devastating words echoed and re-echoed. “Down’s Syndrome, Mongolism, Institution, Hopeless. Such shocking, heart-breaking words. The baby is ours; there must be something we can do; there must be help available somewhere!

Later, at home, wondering if we were right in refusing to accept the hopeless prognosis, Mrs. Dorothy Shumake, the home visitation nurse, stopped by and explained the new concept, a training center for retarded children called Happy Hearts School.

Thanks to Happy Hearts School, Dave can read, print, count, and socialize. He was a Cub Scout, and now is a Boy Scout. He has earned some skill awards and has a merit badge in fishing. Annually he attended one week of summer camping at Camp Stigwandish, with about two hundred normal boys without any concessions for his handicap. He has camped outdoors in 20-degree snow at a Klondike Derby. We are proud and grateful for his progress and we feel certain that with continued schooling he will become more self-supporting.

Please support the Happy Hearts School 1.4 mill levy (Ashtabula County Mental Retardation Levy) so that the new parents of a special child will never again have to hear those heartbreaking words, but will be informed instead “your child is Mongoloid but he has a future. There is this Happy Hearts School-“

Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Urban,  
March Road, Jefferson

## 1970s Scenes

### Happy Heart Art Show Set, April 1972



Happy Hearts School and Ash/Craft Shop will sponsor an art show of various art works created by students at the school at the Ashtabula Fine Arts Center on Lake Avenue in Ashtabula.

Mrs. Aili Hokkanen, Art Director at the school and Chairman for the show is assisted by teachers Miss Denise Davis; Tim Cunningham; Carl Schwartz; and Mrs. Margaret Brunnell.



She said that items made in the Ash/Craft shop will be offered for sale. The general public is invited to the showings which will run through April 10, 1972. Opening day is expected to be the featured day, as art students and workers in the shop will be on hand, she said.



Refreshments will be available at the show.

The Eiffel Tower painted as a group project by Mrs. Hokkanen's students will adorn the entrance to the Fine Arts Center. Student Debbie Stillman works on weaving a beret like the one modeled by Otis McMillion. A student made tapestry is in the foreground.

Happy Hearts School children show some of the artwork they have been preparing for an upcoming art and gym show.

Beginning at 2 p.m., Sunday, the show, in the form of a circus, will feature sideshows, a fortune teller, gym activities,

and refreshments. April 20, 1972.

### **Art Work Viewed at Happy Hearts Open House**

Miss Aili Hokkanen, Arts and Crafts teacher at Happy Hearts School, admires work created by her students. Rudolph was made of paper Mache and the horse was created of macaroni. Mrs. Hokkanen was chairman of the recent open house.

Art committee for an open house held March 28 at the Fine Arts Center to display the art work of students and clients of the Happy Hearts School and Ash/Craft Work Shop.

Committee members included Mrs. Vincent Bishop; Mrs. Wilbert Brunell; Tim Cunningham; Denise Davis; Carl Schwartz; and Betty Hartley.

Members of the committee and the students, teachers, and teachers' aids put forth a great deal of time and effort creating exhibits for the show.

The show was further enhanced by the presence of Mrs. Vera Acrosine who played the accordion and accompanied two of the girls from the school who sang several numbers.

Refreshments were served during the afternoon.

### **Happy Hearts Students Win Poster Prizes**

*Administrative Director Wayne Reese (right) and Arts and Craft teacher Aili Hokkanen (left) present Happy Hearts School students with*



*certificates of achievement. The students selected as finalists in the National Safety Poster Contest include (left to right) Beth Fogle, Karen Benton, and Jane McCarthy. Not shown in the photo is Leslie Jusko who also received a certificate. The contest is sponsored by the United Commercial Travelers of America. July 13, 1972*



*Vicki Brown personifies the overall atmosphere, upon receiving her award for a poster contest. James Conway, program supervisor for the school, presented the awards. Other students receiving monetary poster awards were Tammy Hayes, Debbie Stillman, Amos Murray, Mari-jo Wilson; Eddie Cook; Nelson Morrison; Anthony Turner; and Elis Hairston. June 18, 1973.*

Four students at Happy Hearts School have been selected as finalists in the National Safety Poster Contest sponsored by the United Commercial Travelers of America.

Local Travelers Chapter 330 sponsored the contest at Happy Hearts School. For the school competition, the winners were Karen Benton, Beth Fogle, Jane McCarthy, Leslie Jusko, Myron

Littler, Annette Bluhm and Michael Robison.

Of this group, four were selected on the state level to represent the grand council in a national competition to be held in Texas. The statewide winners were Jane McCarthy, Karen Benton, Beth Fogle, and Leslie Jusko. United Commercial Travelers is a fraternal benefit society founded in Columbus. The organization has chosen as its civic project aid to retarded children.

In the past, the local chapter has given scholarships to the teachers at Happy Hearts School to further their training in the education of retarded children. The local organization has also provided money for Christmas gifts for the children at the school for several years.

With a total membership of more than 250,000 the organization has nearly seven hundred local councils in forty-seven states, the District of Columbia, and all provinces of Canada.

### **James Conroy Appointed Acting Administrator at Happy Hearts School**



James Conroy, program supervisor at Happy Hearts School, was appointed acting administrator of the school Thursday by the Ashtabula County Mental Retardation Board.

He accepted the interim position, effective October 1, for a maximum period of 60 days while the board seeks a permanent replacement for former administrator Wayne Reese. Mr. Reese recently accepted a position with the Lake County Board of Mental Retardation.

Mr. Conroy, 37, has been program supervisor at Happy hearts since November 1972. Previously, he was a speech therapist in the Conneaut City School District. A native of Pittsburgh, Mr. Conroy graduated from California Pennsylvania State College in 1962 and completed graduate work at the University of Pittsburgh in 1967.

He is a past president and active member of the Conneaut-Lakeville youth Organization.



Staff reception for Dr. William Hall (second from right) new administrator for Happy Hearts School was given by the school teachers' association. Greeting Dr. Hall are program supervisor James Conroy (center) and reception planning committee members (from left) Mrs., Ted Banner, Miss Alyce Lange, and Mrs. Joseph Seaman.

## **Happy Hearts Administrator Is Honored**

March 8, 1974

New Happy Hearts School Administrator Dr. William Hall was welcomed at a reception of teachers and staff following his first day in his new position. The reception was given by the Happy Hearts Teachers Association. Mrs. Ted Banner, Mrs. Joseph Seaman, and Miss Alyce Lange were the planning committee for the reception.

One of the major duties faced by Dr. Hall in his new job is to work with the levy planning committee to promote the passage of a 1.4 mill operating levy by the county voters in the May primary.



The reception also recognized James Conroy, program supervisor, who performed as interim administrator upon the departure of former administrator Wayne Reese.

## **The Day the Winds Blew Through School**

*July 10, 1974. School workers examine the strewn debris on the lower-level roof of the*

*Happy Hearts School. High winds last night twisted the school's antenna and blew portions of the upper-level roof across the south parking lot and lawn.*

The school is suspending summer classes.

An Ashtabula Star Beacon story dated July 10, 1974, reported tornado-like winds in an early morning thunder storm smashed into Happy Hearts School. The winds

ripped off the gymnasium roof, and some blocks from the wall of the building were torn out. The lower roof covering the remainder of the building is buckled and heavily damaged and the gymnasium and classrooms were flooded by the rain waters. Telephone and electric service to the building were disrupted. The storm caused at least \$250,000 in damage, according to the story.

A story published later in the month announced classes were to resume at Happy Hearts and that the school damage figure turned out to be much lower than the original estimated amount.

Administrator William Hall said that summer classes at Happy Hearts school would resume because of the rapid progress of the work crews who were repairing storm damage. He estimated that at least twenty repairmen were working at the school. The Beidler-Taylor Roofing Co. is working on roof repairs while Buckeye Masonry Co., the original contractor for the school, is repairing masonry along the edge of the gymnasium roof. "Both companies have really expedited the work," Dr. Hall said. "We expect to be very nearly, if not totally, completed with roof repair by Monday."

The administrator of the special education school said he believed the \$250,000 damage estimate made the morning after the storm struck would eventually be revised downward considerably. The building is fully covered for damage under public and institutional insurance, County Administrator Betty Cowles said Thursday.

Mrs. Cowles said the damage has been examined by an insurance adjustor, who is to meet with the building contractors today to approve a final damage estimate. The current rough estimate is about \$20,000 for roof repairs, plus a lesser amount for repairs inside the building, she said. The estimate will be much smaller than the original estimate because no structural damage has been done to the building, as was originally feared. The roof over the classroom section of the building had appeared to be buckled by the winds, but it has since settled.

Work crews expect to complete most of the roof repairs shortly. They will then move inside, where they will replace drop ceiling panels, do some painting, and perform other incidental repairs.

The Ashtabula Star Beacon reported that the storm that shook Happy Hearts School this week also shook the spirits of several Ashtabula Countians, at least for a time.

One mother said that her child cried when she heard about the damage to her school and many parents talked about how much the school had changed their lives and the lives of their children.



### **Dancing Through the Seventies**

*Enjoying themselves at the Ash/Craft picnic on August 16, 1974, are (left) Susan Bradley and Andy Grecko and far right June Cichy. The picnic was organized by Mrs. Gertrude Smith, supervisor, with the help of workshop specialists.*

December 18, 1975.



*Jewel's Dance Hall came alive with dancing April 21, 1978, for the clients of Ash/Craft Workshop and Happy Hearts School. Taking a spin around the floor are (from left) Mrs. Stanley Gaumer and Larry Moroski and Mrs. Nadine Flack and Claude Gaumer.*

## Timeline 1970s

1970

The council spearheaded the development of a long-range commitment to the establishment of local residential facilities.

Purchased fleet of eight new buses.

Initiated a hot lunch program.

Established position of Instructor Supervisor.

Hosted the Region VI Spring conference.

Participated in the Special Olympics in Cleveland.

Established contract with Ash/Craft for custodial services to the building.

Constructed portable walls to increase the number of classrooms.

Established: School age developmental class; adult activities center; music program. Caseload: Home services-92; Community class program-93; Adult services-48; Total: 233.

1971

Established second preschool class.

Provided speech and hearing screening for all enrollees.

Established school colors and name. Ashtabula Road Runners. Navy and light blue.

Added ninth bus to transportation fleet.

Present caseload: Home services, 44; Community class program, 110; Adult services 55= 209. Payroll for 42 Ashcraft clients was \$1,039.00.

1972

Council purchased basketball uniforms for the "Roadrunners."

The council purchased bleachers for the school gymnasium.

Added two buses to bring the fleet total to eleven.

Conducted the first summer camp program, financed by the 169 Board. Sixty children attended.

A speech therapy program was established for twelve students at the Crippled Children Clinic.

Conducted the first in building swimming program.

Established the position of Transportation Coordinator (Howard Dunlavy).

1973

All buses were equipped with citizens band radios.

Speech Therapy was now provided for fourteen students in the building. Service

was in conjunction with Edinboro State College and Crippled Children Clinic. Summer Camp enrollment was set at 117 students.

The 169 Board entered an agreement with the 648 Board and Children's Service Board to provide funding for residential services for profoundly retarded children six years of age or below.

The Board received a \$15,000 federal grant to establish a group home for retarded people. The program received \$37,000 under Title I.

The Board agrees to accept high school students from the Buckeye School System for work study with our students.

Caseload: Home services, 33; Community class program, 121; Adult services, 64=218. James Conroy is the principal.

1974

Health services were established with Alyce Lange, RN. becoming a full-time program nurse.

A residential committee was established to plan for and initiate a program for residential services.

The Home Training Department was enlarged to include a full-time training worker.

Speech Therapy was established as a full-time program.

Dr. William Hall became the Administrator for the program.

Caseload: Home services, 44; Community class program, 118; Adult services, 66=228.

1975

Physical Therapy services initiated.

Greenhouse operation as part of Ash/Craft established.

Proposal for a new workshop approved by Division of Mental Retardation.

Present caseload: Home services, 36; Community class program, 125; Adult services, 74= 235.

Three Special Olympic Athletes attended the national track meet in Michigan.

1976

Mr. Larry Korland is employed as Adult Services Director.

Residential home purchased in North Kingsville by the Ashtabula County Residential Services Corporation.

Infant Stimulation program established.

Plans approved and bids taken for new workshop.

Present caseload: Home Services, 13; Community class program, 129; Adult



Services, 76; /Infant Stimulation, 6; = 224.

Inez Gaumer has now provided Religious Education Classes to all students for 15 years.

1977

Construction of a new workshop began.

Approval of renovation project at Happy Hearts School received from Division of Mental Retardation.

Happy Hearts School is among the first such programs to be chartered by the State of Ohio Department of Education.

Residential home renovation completed and occupied by house parents and young men.

Present caseload: Home Services, 12; Infant Stimulation, 13; Community Classes, 114; Adult Services, 79 = 218.

Open House at boy's residence (Maples I)

Ash/Craft Board adopts constitution. A.R.C. to appoint 3 of 9 members.

The Orff players performed for the Ohio State Music Educators Association in Columbus, Ohio.

Special Olympics Eighth Annual Ohio Athletics Association at Ohio State University. Forty-two students participated.

1978

New workshop completed and occupied.

Renovation of Happy Hearts School begun.

Mr. Melvin Daniel was employed as the first psychologist.

Mechanic employed to maintain bus fleet.

Present caseload: Home Services 13; Infant Stimulation, 18; Community Classes, 113;

Adult Services, 96 = 240.

Mrs. Nadine Flack Moroski received Mother of the Year Award for mental retardation service in Ashtabula County by Governor James Rhodes.

1979

Renovation of Happy Hearts School completed.

New greenhouse at Ash/Craft constructed.

Mr. Douglas Burkhardt was employed as superintendent of the Board of Mental Retardation.

Inez Gaumer was named Mother of the Year and was presented a certificate in recognition for her distinguished services by Governor James Rhodes.

Kingsville Lions Club formed a Leo Club for clients.

Eleven buses transport 250 people with eighty staff members.  
Aili Hokkanen and Dr. Hall retire.

## Special Story- From the Scrap Book of Wayne Reese

Memories from Mr. Reese's departure for Lake County, 1972

Mr. Reese is well known for his desire to help his teachers so when in the early days of my teaching at Happy Hearts I had a problem with a particular child who cried all of the time. I had tried everything and finally, in desperation, I went to Mr. Reese in the hope that he would solve my problem. He listened carefully and finally said: "Why do you ask me? An Italian never gives up."

Marta Triozzi

Dear Wayne,

In spite of pressing problems, More than one would think, You took precious moments, To fix the Home-Ec sink!

Thanks a million. Dorothy (Bishop)

During choir one day we were discussing plans for the Christmas program. I explained that a Mary and Joseph would be chosen from those in the choir, but that Jesus would need to be someone small – someone from a primary class. One little student raised his hand and said, "Mrs. Krug, Mrs. Krug, I know who we can get to play Jesus – Mr. Reese cuz he is small!"

Mrs. Krug

Do you remember when one fine fall Friday afternoon around 4:15 I was driving bus on a northern county route. Your telephone rang and I enthusiastically informed you that the bus I was driving had just been hit by a flying duck. I expected sympathy.... you laughed. Well, anyway with a shattered windshield and shattered spirits, I drove the bus to a garage where a group of highly specialized mechanics decided that the feathers imbedded in the windshield and in my hair were actually from a pheasant and not a duck.

Russ (Grippi)

Do you remember when we were setting up "Camp Fun in the Sun 1972? After many calls around town, we finally got five tons of sand donated. Three tons were hauled to a sand box and two tons were placed in the bottom of the pool. After all that work we got to thinking that the sand might not be the right kind, as it had

small pebbles mixed in with it! Sure enough, a call to the store where the pool was purchased confirmed our thoughts. Needless to say, the next few days were spent taking two tons of sand out of the pool-not by modern unloading methods, but by filling good old-fashioned Kentucky Fried Chicken buckets and emptying them back into what turned out to be an Olympic sized sand box.

Russ (Grippi)

### Special Story: Russ Grippi's Perspective on Happy Hearts History

Happy Hearts School had its beginning on a Sunday afternoon in March 1954. Five families met at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Steven Weintz in response to an ad placed in the classified section of a local newspaper by Mrs. Weintz, seeking people interested in starting a school for the mentally retarded. From the beginning, it was a dedicated group, held together by a common bond; each family had a retarded child and each wanted their child to be given the opportunity of understanding and training in a school atmosphere conducive to meeting the needs of the handicaps possessed by their children. The names of the parents who attended that meeting are Mr. and Mrs. Paul Berg; Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Kapen; Mr. and Mrs. Gene Moroski; Mr. and Mrs. Steven Weintz; and Mr. and Mrs. John Wilkinson.

It can be said that Happy Hearts School had its birth with the culmination of that very first meeting. For before the meeting had ended, the Ashtabula County Council for Retarded Children (ACCRC) was formed and its objectives clearly spelled out. Mr. Gene Moroski was elected as the Council's first president. Later, three delegates were selected to attend the 2nd Annual Meeting of the Ohio Association for Retarded Children, which was held in Cleveland. The delegates returned with good news! It was learned that Ohio law provided that eight people could petition the Child Welfare Board to establish a community class program for the retarded. The good news was short lived, however, because the Child Welfare Board refused to take positive action on the Council's petition even though the establishment of a community class program would be absolutely no financial burden to them whatsoever. This setback proved to be only the first of many which were to follow in the ensuing years.

The next few months were spent setting up a speaker's bureau. Its purpose: to go out into the county and meet with the people, stimulating interest and an awareness of the need for a program such as this. The Council met with overwhelming success from the people of Ashtabula County. Local county and city newspapers, along with social and church groups responded favorable to the ACCRC's plea. It

was during this time that members of the Council suggested and voted upon the selection of a name for their new school. Thus, and appropriately so, Happy Hearts emerged.

Fund raising projects and donations enabled the school to open its doors for the first time in September of 1955, with its one classroom located in the basement of the Methodist Church on Elm Avenue in Ashtabula, having an enrollment of seven children. The first teacher at Happy Hearts was Mrs. Esther Bennett, a compassionate woman who not only served as teacher but also as administrator, bus driver, and later, even did the cooking for the hot lunch program when the school moved to a new location. During this first year, many of the parents had to provide their own transportation or else pay someone to transport their child. Tuition, if you could afford to pay it, was six dollars a week.

In 1956, due to an increase in enrollment, the School was moved to a new Sunday School Classroom at the Harris Memorial Church in Ashtabula. The program now employed two teachers, Mrs. Charles Bennett of Conneaut, and Mrs. William Barndt of Austinburg, one aid, and tuition remained at six dollars a week. A highlight of the year, and one that helped to “keep the doors open,” was a contribution in the amount of \$950.00 from the United Appeal.

Academically, the school thrived from the very beginning. Children were developing both physically and mentally in obtaining new and varied skills. This development was evident amongst friends, family, and neighbors and community support continued to grow. In 1957, favorable public response led to a reluctant signing of the necessary papers by the Child Welfare Board, which gained State Recognition. Unfortunately, even with the signing of the petition, some Board members felt that a community-based program would have no value.

Upon signing of the petition by the Child Welfare Board, each parent faced a second hurdle— that of obtaining an E-1 exclusion from the public schools for their child. An E-1 Exclusion is a permit to exclude children from attending public schools. The various school boards proved to be somewhat reluctant in issuing the E-1 Exclusion. One cannot help but wonder if this reluctance were due to actual ignorance of what an E-1 exclusion is; or can it possibly be attributed to the fact that the school board would stand to lose state aid for each child excluded?

Although the School was granted some state aid in 1957, responsibility for financing most of the program remained with the Council. The enrollment continued to grow rapidly and the school year 1957-1958 brought the total number

of children to thirty-four, and the necessity to expand again, now having three teachers and three classrooms. With the help of state aid, tuition decreased to fifteen dollars a month. The year 1958 also meant another physical move of the school from Harris Memorial Church to an old brick school building in Kingsville. The stay in Kingsville was short lived.

On September 8, 1959, Happy Hearts School began its fourth year by moving to the old elementary school building in Austinburg. A verbal agreement between the Austinburg School Board and the ACCRC provided for rent free usage providing the Council would make all needed repairs—to include wiring, much new plumbing, rebuilding the heating plant, painting, and cleaning. Enrollment increased to forty-four. The faculty was headed by Mrs. Ray Bolmeyer of Rock Creek as Superintendent. Other teachers were Miss Barbara White of Ashtabula, Mrs. Roger (Joan)Sisson of Madison-on-the-Lake, and Mrs. Vincent Bishop of Ashtabula.

One of the greatest problems during the school year was transportation. The council purchased a bus and a station wagon to help solve the problem. In February of 1960, it became apparent that because of inadequate finances, Happy Hearts School faced a one month early close. At this time, State Aid provided approximately one-third of the total operating expenses of \$27,000 annually. The people of the county again rallied however, contributing the needed monies. Some of the helping hands at this time were the Rock Creek Methodist Church, the American Legion Post of Kingsville; a one-thousand-dollar gift by an anonymous donor, and small amounts from various county social organizations, totaling \$2,600.00

Realizing the need for a stable income to Happy Hearts School, Ashtabula County Commissioners, in June 1960, approved a resolution to place a .2 mill operating levy for three years on the November ballot for the benefit of the school. Ashtabula County voters approved the levy by a conclusive two-to-one margin. This levy, which carried the support of practically every civic and charitable organization as well as both political parties, won an impressive vote of 25,627 to 12,488. The passing of this levy permitted the school to begin operating on the same basis as public schools –through direct tax support. Jurisdiction of the program, by law, was now under the Child Welfare Board.

As an economy move, the County Welfare Board decided to move Happy Hearts School once again to the Children's Home basement. Cost of renovation was estimated at from \$12,000 to \$14,000, and the move was completed by the

beginning of the school year 1961. Enrollment, at this time, was forty-eight students, with four full-time teachers.

Effective with the school year 1962, a new director was hired –G. Thomas Graf—a fifth class was started, and Mrs. Dorothy Shumake, a registered nurse, was hired as a home training consultant. It was also during the year 1962 that Mr. Graf initiated a workshop program for the young adults. The program was initially instituted in the basement of the Children’s Home, but soon moved to the Goodwill Industries Building in the Ashtabula Harbor area, where it remained until 1967, at which time the shop relocated in the former Manpower Training Center in Jefferson, Ohio.

Nineteen Sixty-Four was a happy year for Happy Hearts—it saw the passage of a five-year renewal levy and formation of Boy Scout, Girl Scout, and Cub Scout troops. As usual, enrollment continued to grow with total enrollment at 72. A sixth class was started and sixth teacher hired.

Effective August 31, 1965, G. Thomas Graf resigned as director of the program. Mr. Graf accepted the post of executive director for the Atlanta, Georgia Association for Retarded Children. Mr. Wayne G. Reese of Columbus was hired as the new director, effective September 1, 1965.

During May of 1965, the Ashtabula County Child Welfare Board (Eleanor Jammal-Chairman) went to the County Commissioners with a tentative proposal for a 25,000 square foot school, citing possible loss of state aid unless larger facilities were built. Awaiting the arrival of Mr. Reese in Ashtabula were the problems of where, when, and how the present school would be enlarged or a new school would be built. Many alternatives were offered. One was to remodel the present Children’s Home building. This seemed at first to be the most economical path to follow as it would also make use of a county owned building.

Upon submission of remodeling plans by an architect, it was determined that a remodeling program would not be feasible as each county office occupying the building still would not have enough room. After the completion of many meetings, the legislative processes finally started to take shape and it was decided by the County Commissioners to place a \$670,000 bond issue (or 1.33 mill for 22 years) on the November 1966 ballot. Once it was decided that a new school was to be built, members of the Council immediately shifted into high gear to seek passage of the bond issue. Area captains were assigned with the responsibility for familiarizing the public with the need for the proposed school and also for answering any questions the public may have had concerning the program.

Captains were Mrs. Paula Gregory, 1219 Westshore Dr., Ashtabula; Mrs. Helen Millspaugh, RD2, Geneva; Mrs. Joseph Hunter, 1456 Lee Rd. Ext., North Kingsville; Mrs. Myron Hudson, RD1, Pierpont; Joseph Urban, RD4 Jefferson; and Mrs. Henry Roux, Linden Ave., Jefferson. Here again, it must be pointed out, that this movement had tremendous favorable coverage by the local press and county, social, political, and church groups.

On Tuesday, November 8, 1966, the dreams of staff and Council members were realized when an overwhelming 72 per cent “yes” vote paved the way for a new Happy Hearts School. Four other bond issues were defeated—bonds for a new county home, a new county jail, and two issues for a juvenile training center. With the passage of the levy, Matt Kujala, architect/engineer for the new school project, told Commissioners the new building should be placed on the parcel of land in front of the present Children’s Home on Rt. 20 just east of Ashtabula City.

He noted a second choice as the property along Greene Road in Kingsville, next to the County Home. This property, however, would cost about \$25,000 more in site preparation for a facility. It was then announced on January 17, 1967, by the County Commissioners, that county-owned property at the intersection of Rt. 84 and Infirmary Rd., just west of the County Home, would be the site of the new Happy Hearts School.

The growth of the program did not stand still even while the new school building was in the making. During the summer of 1966, the Council established a new summer recreation program for the children. Upon returning to school the following September, enrollment had increased (bus fleet was now seven) and it was necessary, in addition to classrooms at the Children’s Home, to open three classes at the Eastside Presbyterian Church basement.

In 1967, a new law (Amended Senate Bill 169) was passed which authorized the County Commissioners to create the present Mental Retardation Board, or, as commonly referred to, the 169 Board. The new law stated that each county should appoint members to the board to administer, operate, employ personnel, and provide facilities and equipment for training programs for mentally deficient persons. Enactment of this law eliminated the Child Welfare Board as the School’s governing body. The new board consisted of seven members, two to be appointed by Probate Judge (Calvin Hutchins) and the remaining five to be appointed by County Commissioners. Appointed to four-year terms by Commissioners were Dr. David Lusk, Mrs. Niles Koski, and Charles von Tesmar. Named to two-year terms were Gene Moroski and Joseph Hunter. Appointed to three-year terms were Judge

Hutchins and Mrs. Robert Frederick.

As mentioned earlier, the Sheltered Workshop Program moved to the former Manpower Training Center in Jefferson during 1967. Also, certification for a sheltered workshop was issued by the Federal Labor Wage and Hour Department at the time of this move. The board of directors adopted the name “Ash/Craft” for its new shop program, and the program went on a year around basis.

With bids ranging approximately \$100,000 under estimated cost, the construction of Happy Hearts School started on July 15, 1967. Contracts were awarded to Precision Piping Co. (for mechanical constructions), Geneva Electric (electrical work), and Buckeye Masonry and Construction of Jefferson. Official groundbreaking ceremonies took place on July 20, 1967.

The new Happy Hearts School was completed on August 1, 1968, with dedication ceremonies taking place on Sunday, November 3, 1968. After 14 years of holding classes in church basements, abandoned schools and in the basement of the Child Welfare Boards Children’s Home, Happy Hearts School opened its doors to the children at its new location in September of 1968. Enrollment consisted of two primary classes, one intermediate class, two department classes, and twenty-five trainees in Ash/Craft.

As of 1971, the school for the once rejected human beings of our society had far surpassed the dreams of those few parents who back in 1954 acted to make their dreams a reality. From a school with no specific guidelines for teachers to follow except those developed by themselves, with primary emphasis on social graces, underpaid teachers without degrees (salaries for teachers in the beginning were in the \$200 a month range), the program has blossomed into one of professionalism. It is devoted to meeting all needs—from cradle to grave- of the mentally retarded in Ashtabula County.

Teachers are now required to have earned a degree (an exception is made for those with one hundred semester hours or more, provided they earn at least six additional hours credit a year towards a degree), plus obtain additional certification in mental retardation by the state. Pay scales are now just slightly less than public school teachers. The program for the children, presently serving over two hundred, has definite direction. Children are guided from age three in the areas of social behavior, self-care, communication, basic knowledge, practical skills, and body usage. The people of Ashtabula County can truly be proud of the creation they helped to form—a living monument, dedicated to seeking human dignity.



## Chapter Four: Expanding, Enduring, and Enjoying the 1980s

### Getting Ready for the 25th Anniversary Open House, April 27, 1980



*(Left to right) Terri Church, 20-year teacher Dorothy Bishop, and Tammy Hayes make cookies in Home Economics class to serve to people attending the Happy Hearts School and Ash/Craft Workshop open house on April 27, 1980.*

*Ash/Craft workers (left to right) Beth Fogle, Diane Dickson, and Julie Morse ready their greenhouse plants for display and sale during the 25th Anniversary Open House.*



## 1980: Happy Hearts School and Ash/Craft Workshop Celebrate 25 Years of Growth

Ashtabula County Board of Mental Retardation and the Ashtabula County Council for Retarded Citizens cordially invites you to attend our Open House to Commemorate Twenty-Five Years of History and Growth including Happy Hearts School, Ash/Craft Industries, Incorporated, The Ash/Craft Greenhouse

Sunday, April 27, 1980, 2505 South Ridge East, Ashtabula, Ohio 44004  
Open House 1:30 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. Program 2:00 p.m.

In an Ashtabula Star Beacon story dated April 27, 1980, reporter Catherine Ellsworth wrote about the Happy Hearts School and Ash/Craft Industries celebratory open house commemorating 25 years of operation.

The celebration open house, held from 1:30 to 6 p.m., included tours of the school and workshop as well as a program featuring Dorothy DeBolt who had recently been named Mother of the Year. She and her husband had adopted twenty mentally retarded children. Happy Hearts had grown like the flowers currently blooming in the Ash/Craft greenhouse since it opened in 1955 in the basement of the First Methodist Church on Elm Avenue in Ashtabula with eleven students and a teacher and assistant teacher.



*directors of Ash/Craft.*

*Celebrating 25 Years. April 27, 1980. Noting the 25th Anniversary of the Council for the Mentally Retarded in Ashtabula County, an open house was held at Happy Hearts School and Ash/Craft Industries on Sunday. Standing behind the extra-large cake are Douglas Burkhardt, superintendent of Happy Hearts School; Dorothy Debolt, guest speaker, and Stanley Gaumer, a member of the board of*

After over a decade of vagabond moving from place to place and the passage of a financing levy, Happy Hearts and Ash/Craft moved into their new quarters on August 1, 1968, and a dedication ceremony took place in November 1968. This first year, the \$600,000 building housed 136 children, and after 14 years of hit or

miss facilities, the staff and pupils enjoyed ten classrooms, a gymnasium, cafeteria, health and testing room, workshop, and office.

In 1980, 127 pupils were enrolled in Happy Hearts School and another seventeen children in the home training program. By 1980, programs in the school extended far beyond academics. Children were taught daily living skills such as managing money and personal care, and according to their abilities learned dancing, games, prayers, exercises, music, camping, and bowling. A nurse and speech therapist joined the staff and in 1973, the Board received funding to provide residential services for mentally retarded children six years and under and establish a group home for retarded people.

In February 1976, Happy Hearts administrators introduced an Infant Stimulation Program. Funded by Title I, the program was designed to help developmentally delayed children reach their full potential by creating a stimulating environment and guiding their interaction with that environment. Although these children aren't functioning at their age level, Program Director Russell Grippe said that they aren't necessarily mentally handicapped but could be just behind in some areas.

According to Director Russell Grippe, infants as young as two days old have been referred to the program, and MR/DD Superintendent Dr. Douglas Burkhardt stressed the importance of reaching these children before school age and training and involving parents to help their children. The final goal of the program was educating the community about the importance of early intervention and helping to understand mentally retarded and developmentally delayed children and their families.

Expanding beyond its beginnings with the Happy Hearts School, the Ash/Craft workshop acquired its own board of directors, its own program, and in the fall of 1976, its own quarters, a 20,000 square foot one story building accommodating two hundred people. Presently, there are 117 clients in the workshop. The workshop provides a sheltered environment for moderately and severely retarded and developmentally disabled adults from Ashtabula County. The year around program gives workers or 'clients' the opportunity to reach their full physical, social, and vocational potential. Supervisors use the workshop facilities to teach workers basic skills. The workers are paid, pay taxes, and in some cases, they find employment outside of the workshop.

Larry J. Korland, Adult Services Director, explained that the Ash/Craft program had three parts. The first part of the Ash/Craft program is subcontracting light

assembly and packaging jobs for local industries in Lake and Ashtabula Counties. Industries like Emco-Wheaton, Reliance Electric, and Rockwell International use the Ash/Craft workers.

A 3,500-foot square greenhouse on the premises is the second part of the Ash/Craft program. The greenhouse does wholesale and retail business. The third part of the Ash/Craft program is a merchandising department, concentrating on the manufacturing of craft-type items for wholesale and retail distribution. Some of these items will be available at the open house. Instruction, counseling, first-aid, and nursing services are also available to the workshop clients.

Before the Happy Hearts School, the Ash/Craft Sheltered Workshop, the Boards and parent groups, parents of special needs children often felt isolated. Nadine Moroski, part of the pioneer organizational meeting recalled, “We had no place to go before this group. Even our doctors usually said to institutionalize the child or take them home and give them all the love you can.”

The Happy Hearts School, all the programs, and the Ash/Craft Workshop help prepare special needs children to function in and contribute to the community and include their parents as well.



*Ann Lovas and teacher Betty Hartley at the Happy Hearts Open House.*

The Ashtabula County Board of Mental Retardation and the Ashtabula County Council for Retarded Citizens sponsored the open house. The 1980s saw a change the Board's name from the Ashtabula County Council for Retarded Citizens to Association for Retarded Citizens of Ashtabula County. The local Association is a member of the Ohio and National Associations for retarded Citizens, which strengthens the forward movement of the program for legislation and long-range development for retarded people.

### **Placing New People on the MR/DD Board**

In June 1980, The Rev. Daniel Kulesa, pastor of St. Joseph Church in Ashtabula, became the second new board member within the last few months. Mary Ellen Higley began her term in March. Later that summer in August 1980, Ashtabula Star Beacon staff reporter Jerry Robinette reported that the Ashtabula County Board of Mental Retardation had hired a new principal for Happy Hearts. A committee of board members including Superintendent Douglas Burkhardt voted unanimously to hire Andrew Kovac to replace James Conroy who resigned after six years at the school.

Formerly teaching in East Palestine, Andrew Kovac had worked as a special education teacher at the elementary and secondary levels and earned a master's degree in special education and a principal's certificate. He said that there were a lot of mentally retarded kids in his neighborhood while he was growing up and that he was friends with them. "I definitely did not come just for the money."

Superintendent Burkhardt said that he was very happy to have Andrew Kovac take the position. "He is very well qualified. He has the teaching background and the administrative credentials we were looking for. We did not expect to find someone with his qualifications."

### **Programming Notes**

The Happy Hearts Summer Camp Program was scheduled for three weeks during the summer of 1980, at an estimated cost of approximately \$10,000 less than last year's program. The board also unanimously approved plans to cut the camp from six to three weeks. School age children attend camp free and enjoy various field trips. Most of the present school staff and some personnel from outside the school system, will direct the program.

According to Superintendent Burkhardt, Federal Title I funds were cut \$11,000 from \$74,000 in 1979 to \$63,000 in 1980. Speech and hearing therapy, infant stimulation, behavior modification units, and the salaries of the school psychologist and the home consultant's salary are all funded through the federal program, which is cutting money state wide. He explained that all of the categories except behavior modifications are federally mandated, and he suggested that the Board slash one-quarter of the school psychologist's salary and one-half of the home consultant's salary to make up the fund reduction. The Board unanimously approved his recommendation.

Board members also approved a safety course in swimming instruction for developmentally handicapped students, to be provided by the YMCA-YWCA in Ashtabula. The cost to the board is \$2 a student.

In 1980, the Association for Retarded Citizens donated \$6,000 to develop the Girls Group Home in Conneaut, Maples II. The Maples II hosted an open house on May 3, 1980.



Ash/Craft Industries, Inc.

### **Ash/Craft Greenhouse Opens**

The Ash/Craft newsletter of June 1980 reported that the greenhouse finally opened in January 1980, and that the spring greenhouse plants were the best the workshop had grown. The credit for the excellent plants belonged to the greenhouse workers and their supervisor, Mrs. Cook. Greenhouse sales almost doubled from 1979.

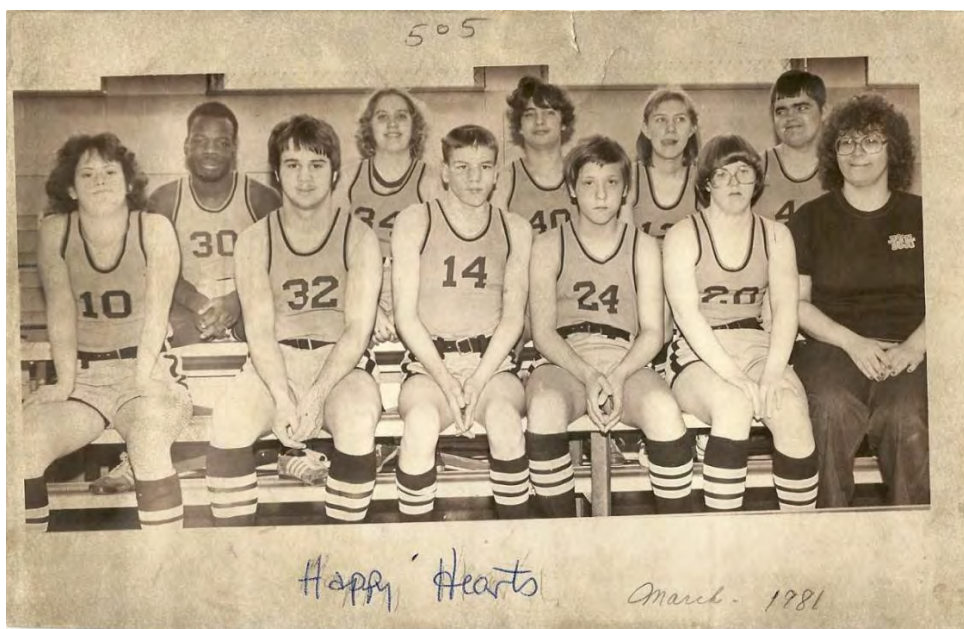
A story in the newsletter stated that the Workshop had been able to provide work for all of its employees without a single day of downtime during the past year. The story stressed the importance of productive work for everyone even with an economic slowdown, because of the Workshop policy of no layoffs. The Ash/Craft program had been built on a strong foundation of quality employees and quality workmanship and good relationships with community and county businesses.

“Through the efforts of Mr. Wiegand, Production Manager, we have made contact with new companies, thereby maintaining the flow of work for our employees,” the story said.

Plans for the Ash/Craft future included developing and marketing new products to be manufactured at Ash/Craft. The workshop currently enjoyed sufficient sub-contract work, but directors felt a product line expansion would insure work for current and future employees.

### **1981: Basketball Championship, Lunch Program, and Levy Campaign**

The next year, 1981, featured among other events, a championship basketball team, and a school lunch problem and a successful levy campaign.



March 20, 1981

In March 1981, the Happy Hearts co-ed basketball team finished the 1981 season as the second- best basketball team in Ohio. According to Coach Anne Zeitler, the team advanced to the finals after defeating Franklin County in a close, tough contest. Happy Hearts won the game 38-36 in regulation time.

Brian Flaucher was the star of the game, scoring all but two of the team's points. Teammate Jan Searcy of Jefferson added the other basket. Advancing to the state finals at Larkins Hall of the Ohio State University campus in Columbus, Saturday the team attempted to defeat Montgomery County for the state co-ed title.

The first-year team lost by nine points, 31-22, with Jan Searcy grabbing nine

points, and Brian Flaughter contributing eight. Brian Lockett added three points, while David Collins put up a field goal.

Coach Zeitler said the team received a plaque, and each player was awarded a participation patch. As for next year, she said, "I'm hoping to build just a little bit more, but I've got a lot to work with."

### **School Lunch Funding Cuts Worry County 169 Board: June 1981**

Douglas Burkhardt, Superintendent of the Ashtabula County Board of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities, (169 Board) told Board members that they would have to take serious action about the school lunch program for the 169 programs unless the state solves the problem. He said the Board could not operate its own school lunch program without federal reimbursement.

Superintendent Burkhardt told the Board that he had received a letter from Robert H. Koon, director of the Division of School Food Service, saying that the federally funded school lunch program could be out of money in May and June and unable to send out reimbursements to schools in Ohio. He said the letter from Robert Koon implied that at this point "it looks like there will be no money for next year's subsidized lunch program because of Reagan's budget cuts."

Director Koon said DSFS is still looking for solutions to the problem, but so far, the Division of School Food Service has not come up with a solution to the problem.

Superintendent Burkhardt advised the Board to delay action on the school lunch program until August to see if anything can be done at the state level, and the Board agreed. He said that if the state does not take any action by August, the Board will have to consider closing the 169 program's lunch programs altogether. Explaining that the lunch program does not pay for itself, he said that it runs between \$4,000 and \$5,000 in the red every year even with reimbursement. "We would have to double or even triple the lunch prices to pay for the program which would put them out of sight. It would be cheaper to eat in a restaurant at those prices," he said.

Other important 1981 events included the Ashtabula County Association for Retarded Citizens purchasing nine sets of caps and gowns to be reused at a cost of \$112.50, Ashtabula County voters passing a 2-mill levy, and a December Pot Luck dinner honoring retiree Dorothy Bishop



## **Looking at Levies Ash/Craft Bulletin September 1981**

by Larry Korland

November third is election day and, as you know, we will have a levy on the ballot for the operation of Happy Hearts School and Ash/Craft Industries. The people with whom I have spoken about the levy of course, want to know why the levy is needed and what it will do for our program.

Basically, the problem with which we are faced is that the money we receive from all sources is not keeping pace with the amount of services we are providing educationally, vocationally, and in transportation. For example, the money we receive from our current tax levy has only increased 6.5 percent since 1975. However, during this same period of time our combined school and workshop population has increased by approximately 48 percent and we expect continued growth over the next five years.

We all know how costly transportation has become. Imagine operating a bus fleet that travels the entire county every working day of the year. Each day our buses run, we use over two hundred gallons of gasoline which translates into over 4,000 gallons a month, to over 48,000 gallons a year, which alone is a considerable amount of money. Considering the tremendous growth of our program, I think you will agree that we have managed to this point remarkably well.

For us to be able to continue the high quality of service and programs which we have provided over the years, we need your help and support. We urge you to vote this November 3 and ask for your support of our programs when you cast your ballot.

If you need additional information or have additional questions, do not hesitate to give me a call.

### **Blue Notes.**

The year 1957 featured a name change for the school. Council members, Staff, parents, and friends voted on a name and Ashtabula County Day School for Retarded Children became Happy Hearts School.



### **Happy Hearts School and Ash/Craft Industries Hold Open House**

*A therapy board and standing table is examined during the Sunday Open House by (left to right) Russ Grippi, Happy Hearts School Coordinator and Dr. Edward James, president of the Ashtabula County Mental Retardation Board.*



The Ashtabula County Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities Board held an open house Sunday, October 5, 1981, at Happy Hearts School and Ash/Craft Industries to generate community support for the Board's levy request on the November ballot. An additional tax of two mills for operating expenses to run five years beginning in 1982 will be decided by Ashtabula County voters.

*Ash/Craft worker James Thompson asks Workshop Specialist Linda Moroski a question about rebuilding gas hose nozzles during the Sunday afternoon open house.*

## **The Five-Year Plan: June 1982**

When they passed a 2-mill levy for the Ashtabula County Board of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities in November 1981, Ashtabula County voters enabled many big and little updates in programs, equipment, and staffing at Happy Hearts School and Ash/Craft Industries. Board officials formulated a five-year plan to ensure that the program will have clear guidelines on how and where the money will be spent. At its last regular meeting in June 1982, the Board approved the five-year plan and approved several of the projects listed in the plan.

Dr. Douglas Burkhardt emphasized that the Board must approve most projects and purchases in the plan before they can be implemented, and the proposed guidelines are not a rigid agenda that cannot be changed. He said that the Board will review the plan in November when it considers the budget for the year and again in January at the organizational meeting, and that Board members or other officials could add or delete items from the plan. On the cover page of his plan, he noted that “The plan shall be organic in that it should be studied at least annually for progress and revision,” Dr. Burkhardt wrote on the cover page of the plan.

Some of the projects and purchases listed in the plan have already begun or are ongoing updates that will continue through the five-year plan. The five-year program is a mixture of items that will cost the board money and others that require work and organization, but no money. One project involving more time and effort than money is organizing volunteers and creating policies for a volunteer program.

Some major projects for Happy Hearts School may be approved during the five-year period, including renovation and remodeling to provide additional classroom space, building a stage in the gymnasium, rubberizing the gym floor for safety, and adding age-appropriate playground equipment.

Ongoing projects requiring money include installing carpet and drapes and updating the gym and school roof repairs. The entire school curriculum will be revised and updated, the volunteer program organized and implemented, and bus routes updated, bus aides added, and buses replaced on an ongoing rotational basis.

### **Happy Hearts School Slated for Improvements**

Part of the five-year plan is focused on updating and improving the Happy Hearts School and according to the plan agenda, many of the improvements will be

considered during the remainder of 1982.

Much of the furniture and equipment in the school building dates to its construction nearly 13 years ago. Classroom equipment, furniture, and cafeteria seating items are original and listed to be replaced this year. Other equipment on the hope to purchase list for the school in 1982 included kitchen items to provide additional freezer and storage space, more audio-visual equipment, a podium and portable chairs, portable risers and a public-address system for gym and cafeteria use.

Besides the other curriculum updates, Dr. Burkhardt noted that the Board will consider adding a formal reading program. He also listed hiring two new staff members as a plan priority, stating a certified art enrichment instructor and a social worker for the Infant Stimulation Early Childhood and adult family members were needed.

Dr. Burkhardt also stated that Happy Hearts School needs a breakfast program and targeted 1984 as a starting year to add the program, while noting that so far school officials have not found an effective way to introduce and implement the program.

#### Ash/Craft Industries Included in the Five-Year Plan

The Ash/Craft Sheltered workshop program was also included in the five-year plan, with a list of improvements and additions outlined and tentatively scheduled. A few of the equipment and program improvements on the agenda for the next several years include adding security lighting outside and emergency lighting inside the building, ramps, and walkways for doors which currently open out into grass, a dust collecting system for the newly added woodworking area, and an updated public-address system. A recreation area for the adults at the workshop will also be considered.

Possible increases in staff would involve hiring a contract sales representative to help find a marketplace for workshop products and an occupational therapist to help workshop adults become more productive and adapt to changes in production methods.

### **1983**

#### **Mary Ellen Higley Will Lead Board in 1983**

The Ashtabula County Board of Mental Retardation and Developmental

Disabilities re-elected Mary Ellen Higley as its chairwoman at its organization meeting on January 26, 1983.

A teacher at Columbus Junior High School, Mary Ellen Higley has been a Board member since 1980 and served as its 1982 chairwoman. The Board also elected Charles Jeffords who works for the Ashtabula County Board of Education as its 1983 vice chairman.

The board set its regular meeting day, time, and place as the third Wednesday of each month at 7:30 p.m. at Happy Hearts School, the same as in 1982. During the regular portion of the meeting, the board also adopted a motion to seek bids on two school buses.

As a point of information, Board Superintendent Douglas Burkhardt told the Board that a state Department of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities report indicated that “the money spent on the Ashtabula County program is less than the state average, less than counties surrounding Ashtabula County, and less than the regional average.” He added that 84.5 percent of the board’s budget is money collected locally from the levy. Only 11 percent of the budget comes from state funding and the rest is federal money,” he said. Dr. Burkhardt also reported to

the Board that the program got a perfect score after a state review just before Christmas. Out of 229 items that were reviewed, 229 of them were marked “compliance” rather than partial-or non-compliance.



### **Happy Heart Teachers Win in “Cameras in the Curriculum” Contest**

*Happy Hearts Teachers Carol Pierce, left, and Betty Hartley, show students from their classes the scrapbook which has been sent to Eastman Kodak as part of a competition which could give the classes a donation. The project involved using photography as a learning tool. The class took several field trips, including one to The Gazette, and photos of the trips were taken. The photos are used in classwork and the teachers are “just overwhelmed” with the success of the program. Jefferson Gazette, June 1, 1983.*

The Ashtabula County Board of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities Recognizes the Achievements of Three Happy Hearts Teachers  
The Ashtabula County Board of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities recently recognized the achievements of Carol Pierce, Betty Hartley, and Carl Schwartz.

Carol Pierce and Betty Hartley won one of 130 national awards presented to teachers who placed in the finals of a “Cameras in the Curriculum” competition featuring over eight hundred entries. The National Foundation for the Improvement of Education, Kodak Program sponsored the competition.

Teachers Carol Pierce and Betty Hartley submitted a proposal they called “Community Helpers, “which involved taking pictures of various persons in service-oriented jobs, such as mail carriers and firefighters. In the classroom, students are asked to match the pictures with the words that identified the community helpers. Their winning proposal was one of just 12 winning proposals that Ohio teachers submitted and received a \$200 prize. The “Community Helpers” proposal will be published in the NEA-Kodak Curriculum Volume and is eligible for one of six top national awards as well as a monetary prize of up to \$1,500 from the NEA.

The Board also commended teacher Carl Schwartz for his classroom achievements. During the past year, he spearheaded a computer curriculum designed to educate more than forty-five mild and severely retarded and handicapped students in the advanced program at Happy Hearts.

According to Board Superintendent Douglas A. Burkhardt, in the last year Carl Schwartz requested and received an Atari educational computer system from the Board which he has been using this year to teach students. Superintendent Burkhardt said, “I don’t know of any other school for mentally retarded and handicapped students in the state using computers to teach mild and severely retarded students.”

Teacher Schwartz demonstrated the system to board members and briefly reviewed some of the various computer programs he uses to teach basic concepts to students. Programs that he and Board members discussed included the ones created to teach colors, letter recognition, counting, adding, and spelling. He said that students had embraced the computer system, with 90 percent of them successfully using the letter recognition program and 85 percent advancing through the counting

program.

According to Carl, he can easily adjust all of the programs to the learning capacity of each individual student. Each program also keeps track of the progress of each student, recording the number of questions answered correctly and incorrectly.

### **1983: New Computer in Happy Hearts School**



*A new computer at Happy Hearts School is one of the first attempts in northeastern Ohio to use computers for instruction of mentally retarded and developmentally disabled students. Tim Starkey, one of the new program's most advanced students, is enrolled in the demonstration of one of the computer programs.*

*Photo by Lisa Sterling. July 14, 1983.*

Another newspaper story in the Ashtabula County Sentinel of July 14, 1983, highlighted a new computer which helped Happy Hearts students learn more and how to run the programs of teacher Carl Schwartz. Happy Hearts principal James Giannell said that the school is one of the first mental retardation facilities in the state to use a computer.

Carl Schwartz, who teaches the advanced, pre-vocational students at Happy Hearts, proposed the computer program for Happy Hearts. He likes the computer especially because he can program exercises and games for each individual student's needs. He noted, however, that out of about 12 programs he now uses, he has designed and typed nearly everyone into the computer system itself. "There are almost no programs written for special needs students," he said.

Principal Giannell said that the students can give the computer yes and no commands and they used that control for about a month, and then teacher Schwartz introduced the keyboard. He said most students can use the keyboard to give the computer commands now. He noted that even children in wheelchairs can use the joy stick to command the computer.

About ten students are learning to actually program the computer for different things and nearly forty others are involved in computer-assisted instruction. Computer programs Carl Schwartz has written can strengthen many skills the students need to practice, including spelling, hand to eye coordination, matching colors, shapes and letters and letter recognition.

“For many of my students it is used mostly as a backup to things they’re learning in other ways,” he said.

### **1984: Orff Band Represents Ohio at the National Very Special Arts Festival in Washington D.C. 1985**



*The Orff Players, a group of eight students from Happy Hearts School, will represent Ohio at the National Very Special Arts Festival in Washington, D.C. in May. Travel expenses of \$2,000.00 will be paid by the Association of Retarded Citizens of Ashtabula County, a parent group. Finishing plans for the trip are (left to right) music teacher Mike DeMarino, student Audrey Thomas, AB president Charles Thomas, and travel arranger Merle Bieder. April 11, 1984.*



Ash/Craft Industries, Inc.

### **Ash/Craft Will Provide 85 More Jobs**

In a December 10, 1985, story written by Angelo Quaranta, staff writer of the Ashtabula Star Beacon, he quoted Ash/Craft Industries Director Larry Korland as predicting that the recent expansion of the production facilities will provide 85



more jobs for mentally retarded and developmentally disabled clients over the next three years.

Currently, Ash/Craft employs more than two hundred people and has increased its manufacturing and assembling capabilities and its instruction and greenhouse space. Director Korland said that a total of 10,000 square feet was added to the Ash/Craft building and the increase in space allowed Ash/Craft to contract more work from outside companies.

Construction was completed in about a year and the expanded area became functional in August. He predicted that over the span of several years, the workshop would be able to employ more than three hundred people. According to Director Korland, besides the Ash/Craft expansion, builders have added 1,800 square feet of greenhouse space and 1,600 square feet of classroom space.

A June 1986 story in the New Directions Community newsletter announced that after the Ash/Craft expansion was completed last fall, the workshop which had been operating two shifts since 1983, would combine them into one beginning on June 30th. The sixty second shift workers were transferred into the mainstream of work activities on the day shift. Continuing education and speech and physical therapy services were more readily available to single shift workers and the merger allowed the elimination of some duplicated services on both shifts.

### **Transportation Trails**

Mechanic David Weaver reported in the June 1986 issue of New Directions that the Happy Hearts-Ash/Craft Transportation Department was changing to diesel vehicles to save fuel, reduce maintenance, and save the environment. He said that by September 1, 1986, diesel buses would cover one third of the bus routes. Transportation Coordinator James R. Kane said that the Transportation Department has eighteen routes covering all corners of Ashtabula County and traveling 1,637 miles a day.

### **1986: Looking at Levies**

A June 1986 article in New Directions, the community newsletter of the Ashtabula County Board of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities spotlighted the financial headaches of funding Happy Hearts School and Ash/Craft Industries, Inc.

On November 4, 1986, the Ashtabula County Board of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities (169 Board) sought to replace a 2.0 mill levy that would expire at the end of the year. The current levy was the primary source of the Board's funding to run the school and workshop and the new levy had to be approved if the programs and services were to continue after December 31, 1986.

The Board reviewed the program's needs for the next five years, including a projected increase in enrollment. It was expected that a final determination of the funds needed would be made in late June. The levy was first approved by the voters in 1981 and collected the same amount today that it did five years ago when it became effective. In fact, as businesses have closed in Ashtabula County, the collection each year has gone down, with the 1986 collection being nearly one-half million dollars less than it was in 1981. This has made the past few years very lean, as it has for most of the community.

These factors have made additional funds necessary since enrollment will be up and collections down. Also, the five-year plans must be made since our tax collection does not increase as property values go up. We must plan 1991 budgets on 1986-dollar values.

Mrs. Inez Gaumer, a member of the Association for Retarded Citizens of Ashtabula County and parent of an adult at Ash/Craft, has graciously agreed to serve as Levy Campaign Chairperson. The real work begins after the Board has determined its needs. The public has supported our program in the past, and continued support depends on our ability to get the information across to the voters before November 4th.

ARC spent \$3,000 on the levy that failed and in 1987 \$3,500 more for the levy fund. An article from MR/DD Board Superintendent Richard J. Cozza, Jr. in the June 1986 New Directions Newsletter warned that the crisis point in state funding for educational and social services programs was rapidly approaching. Several events over the next year will greatly impact programs such as County Boards of mental retardation and developmental disabilities, he wrote.

Superintendent Cozza identified the events as a second state income tax cut; public opinion about a tax increase; and the Gramm-Rudman budget cuts. He said that a second 5 percent cut in the Ohio State Income Tax would take effect in January 1987 if the state unemployment rate fell to 7 percent or lower. Currently the rate is at 7.4 percent, and it is very possible that this second five percent cut will take place. Since it was the 1984 tax increase that brought needed state funding to

MR/DD programs, it is likely that this 5 percent reduction will directly reduce this funding once again. This will severely affect program revenue.

Opinion polls still show that the majority of Ohio residents feel that the 1984 tax increase was unnecessary. It was only through this tax increase that our program received the much-needed funding that kept us from making reductions in service this year. Believe me, it was very necessary to us and to education in general.

The second round of Gramm-Rudman reductions is scheduled to go into effect on October 1st. This round of cuts is to be more severe than those done earlier this year. Federal Revenue Sharing has already been reduced and this will begin to severely limit local and community agencies. The second Gramm-Rudman cut will hit social services hard again.

Your understanding of these issues is important. As the state budget unfolds and as the legislature discusses the next 5 percent tax cut, public input on behalf of this program will be needed to preserve the funding the State of Ohio achieved over the past few years. Be aware of the political and legislature actions in Columbus over the next 6-9 months, and act accordingly as events develop.

**1987**

### **Closing and Opening and a New Principal**

On June 3, 1987, Happy Hearts School and Ash/Craft Industries had to close because voters turned down a levy at the polls. After being reintroduced, a levy passed in August and the school and workshop reopened. At this point in time, Ash/Craft served 220 mentally retarded adults and Happy Hearts 158 children from infants to age 21.

### **Happy Hearts Gains a New Principal September 24, 1987**

Last week, the Ashtabula Board of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities appointed Russell Grippi, who has been with the Ashtabula County Board of Mental Retardation and Environmental Disabilities for more than 17 years, as principal.

The newly appointed principal has been serving as acting principal since January. Before assuming his principal duties, Russell had been Early Childhood Director at Happy Hearts. He has been with the Ashtabula County Board of Mental

Retardation and Environmental Disabilities for more than 17 years. He was made principal as a cost saving measure to fit the budget of the newly passed 2-mill operating levy. Before merging the two positions, the principal's salary was \$34,000. Russ received a five percent pay increase and now earns \$38,200 after assuming the principal's job in addition to the previous Early Childhood director position.

His duties, as they have been for the past nine months, will be to oversee the entire children's program. He said that he used to be responsible for newborn children through age six, but that has now expanded to age 21. "I love my new position. It is a great opportunity to be able to help the children and effectively be a part of their educational planning."

Russ said he will also be overseeing referral intake, multi-disciplinary evaluations, curriculum coordination with local school districts and supervision of both the teaching and support staff.

### **Financial Crisis Ahead by Richard J. Cozza, Jr. Superintendent November 1987**

With the passage of a replacement levy on August 4, the Ash/Craft sheltered workshop was able to reopen on August 17th and the school on August 31st. This reopening was only done through a reduction of twenty staff positions, the reduction being approved by the Board the week following levy passage.

The program has been closed for two months due to lack of funds. The staffing reductions increased class sizes to, in many cases, the maximum allowed by the Ohio Department of Education, reduced speech and physical therapy services, increased transportation times on several routes to near the state maximum of 90 minutes and decreased clerical/office maintenance support within the program.

The Board will be forced to use advances on the 1988 state subsidy to operate through the last part of 1987, leaving fewer available dollars for 1988. The first one to two years of the levy will be very difficult financially, and further reductions or additional unexpected revenue in the future, will be needed to balance the budget for 1989 and beyond.

Further reductions, however, put the Board in danger of being below the level of compliance with State standards. As a result of the passage of only a replacement levy, the Board, at its October meeting, authorized the Superintendent to begin the

redevelopment of a long-range plan. Ohio law requires the Board to annually develop and submit a 3-year plan for its programs and services. The previous plan formed the basis of the increased levy request made in November 1986 and February 1987. The plan will have to be redeveloped on the basis of current information and community support.

At the same time that local funding is being held at replacement levels, State funding is static due to the State's biennium budget reductions, and federal funds are continuing to erode. This entire picture puts the program into a position where the future is very cautious, indeed.

### **Inez Gaumer Honored for Levy Efforts November 1987**

After over a year of efforts to assist in the passage of local levy support, Inez Gaumer deserves the recognition of everyone involved with the Happy hearts and Ash/Craft programs. In September, the program staff held a reception in her honor to recognize her often tireless energy and stamina. In addition, the MR/DD Board officially recognized her efforts at its October 21st meeting, presenting her with a plaque from the Ohio Association of County Boards of MR/DD and a proclamation from the Ohio Senate.

The Board Chairman, Richard Bryant, acknowledged the years of service that Mrs. Gaumer has given to handicapped people in the Board's programs, the Association for Retarded Citizens, and in the community.

### **MR/DD Budget Approved: December 23, 1987**

The Ashtabula County Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities Board (169 Board) approved its 1988 budget of \$3,852,158.90 at its recent meeting. The new budget was financially identical to the 1986 budget said Board Superintendent Richard J. Cozza, He said that there will be a few changes, including the hiring of a night janitor.

Several additional people may be able to be hired through grant money for specific programs, Superintendent Cozza said

## Ash/Craft Work Benefits County

**January 17, 1988**

Ash/Craft Industries Inc. is more than a training facility for mentally handicapped individuals. It is an arm of the business community, according to its director of adult services, Larry Korland, who has been at Ash/Craft for 12 years. He said people fail to realize the contribution the industry makes to the community. Korland said businesses have stated that by subcontracting work with Ash/Craft Industries they have saved money and in turn, saved jobs in their own facilities. "We can help the business community here," Korland said. "We are an arm of the business community."



*Jerry Manus custom cuts cardboard on the band saw and shapes it to fit customer specifications.*



*Mari-jo Wilson sorts key tags at Ash/Craft Industries, Inc.*

## **Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities Board Meets**

The Ashtabula County Board of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities met in January 1988 and considered several items of business. The Board discussed a proposal to create an Ashtabula County Special Olympics Booster Club and said that it would provide equipment and transportation for the program.

In personnel matters, the Board announced that Jean Fields would be a new board member effective January 1, 1988, and that Russell Grippi had resigned his position as principal to become a community placement specialist at the Ash/Craft

Adult Workshop. Over a period of 18 years, Russell Grippi served in various positions at Happy Hearts including teaching, administrative work, early childhood directing, and as principal. Although he knew the move in positions would mean a cut in pay, he was unsure about exact salary figures. He said the new position, tentatively beginning on March 8, would involve working directly with students and their families for accurate job placements in the community.

“I took over at a very good time and I tried to do a good job. I did a good job. They were seeking an applicant and I wanted to be considered. I am moving to a non-administrative position that will enable me to continue to be effective in doing what I like to do. I want to work directly with the clients,” he said.

Happy Hearts School Superintendent Richard J. Cozza Jr. said he was notified about Russ Grippi’s desire to fill the vacant position at Ash/Craft about a week ago. He said he has placed advertisements in local publications in Cleveland, Erie, and Pittsburgh in hopes of filling the state funded principal’s vacancy by the Feb. 15 deadline.

According to Superintendent Cozza, there are 210 retarded adults in the Ash/Craft workshop and of those 210 adults, Russ Grippi will be placing twelve adults into jobs that are presently nearing community placement and twelve graduating seniors moving directly into the community instead of the sheltered workshop atmosphere. “I think Grippe did a really good job here,” Superintendent Cozza said. He knows the community and numerous businesses and I think he will place the adults in very good jobs.”

The Ohio State Department of Education recently visited Happy Hearts School and Ash/Craft and commended the program for operating without deficiencies.

### *Blue Notes*

*July 14, 1983*

Happy Hearts principal James Giannell said that the school is one of the first mental retardation facilities in the state to use a computer.



*Students from Betty Hartley's intermediate class at Happy Hearts School prepare to bury a time capsule to be opened in the year 2,000. A variety of items were placed in the capsule including a videotape of the class, a Billy Ray Cyrus tape, and a recent newspaper. (From left) Beth Harley, Ron Turner, Tom Misch, Rob DeCaro, Matt Mucci and Betty Hartley. Not pictured but involved in the project are Renee Barnard, Nicole Spangler, and assistant teacher Marian Flickinger. Star Beacon photograph by Warren Dillaway.*



*Teacher of the year. Betty Hartley was honored recently for her 25 years as a teacher at Happy Hearts School. She has been working with the Ashtabula County Board of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities. Also pictured are former 169 Board chairman Charles Jeffords, superintendent of Southington Local Schools, Trumbull County (left) and board chairman Dr. Edward James. April 29, 1988. Photograph by John A. Childress.*



## Happy Hearts and Ash/Craft Rededicate After Twenty Years in their Building

*Dr. Edward James, president of the Ashtabula County Board of Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities, gives a brief History of the Happy Hearts School during the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary rededication ceremony on September 23, 1988. The ceremony took place in front of Happy Hearts School. The sign on the left was donated by the Cleveland Electric Illuminating Company.*

*Workers at the Ashtabula plant donated time and erected a sign for the school. John Childress took the Ashtabula Star Beacon photograph.*



On September 23, 1988, the Happy Hearts School and Ash/Craft Industries celebrated their 20th anniversary with a rededication and open house. The celebration begins at 10 a.m. with an open house including tours of both facilities at 2505 South Ridge Road East. Open house runs until 2 p.m. with the rededication at 1 p.m.

Ashtabula County Commissioner Jeanne Bento is expected to speak at the ceremony, as well as Edward James, president of the Ashtabula County (169) Board of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities.

“What we’re doing is honoring those parents and volunteers who 20 years ago spent a great deal of time and effort to get the legislation passed, to establish the program and build the school,” said Richard J. Cozza Jr., 169 Board Superintendent.

Happy Hearts School opened in September 1968. Programs took place since the late 1950s and early 1960s in church basements and other temporary headquarters. The building housed Ash/Craft Industries, a few years later when the 169 Board began to work with adults, Board Superintendent Richard Cozza said.

Later expansions included the erection of a separate building to house the sheltered workshop in 1975. The building was expanded in 1985.

As part of the celebration, an anonymous business donor has given the board about \$200 for landscaping, he said. The Cleveland Electric Illuminating Company also has given a new sign for the school to replace an aging one.

“We plan to plant some crabapple trees by the sign and put up a plaque on one of the outside pillars near the front door of the building to say that the trees were planted to honor all of those who worked to establish the school,” Superintendent Cozza said.

## **Winter, 1988**

### **Long Range Planning Committee Completes Work**

A Long-Range Planning Committee has been reviewing the three-year needs of the program for the past six months. The Committee is composed of staff, a parent, and a Board member, and they have had the responsibility of recommending how the Board should move in the areas of program, finances, and community involvement.

The Committee determined that 1989 will be the last year that the program can operate at even the reduced staffing level which has been in effect since re-opening in 1987. Without new sources of revenue by 1990, the Board may have to begin abandoning some of its school services to local public schools. While this has already begun to occur naturally, such situation for reasons of funding alone would be quite difficult for parents and local school districts in such a short time.

The Committee recommended a gradual movement of agency services into community settings, along with the continuation of cooperative programs with other community agencies. This would allow the Board to alleviate the substantial overcrowding at the school without additional construction, which is simply not possible due to cost.

Unfortunately, the nearly one-hundred adults currently on a waiting list for services will not be able to be served in the adult program through even a modest funding increase. These people will have to be served through temporary home-based services, insuring little real addressing of their needs. Services for a substantially growing group of young children with handicaps will also not be

sufficient to meet the need.

The report is not optimistic, and additional funds are required to make even modest efforts at community movement and to keep services at current, though reduced levels. The Committee made specific funding recommendations which will be reviewed by the Board over the next few months.

We thank the Committee for their efforts and insight. The next few years will be very difficult, especially in light of the County's economics. Hopefully, the Committee's recommendations will assist in getting us through with a minimum of heartache and hardship.

## **1989**

### **Partnerships in Job Training**

Happy Hearts School and the Job Training & Partnership Act, a federal job training program, have negotiated a cooperative education agreement which allows eligible students to work in an entry level job during the 1988-1989 school year. The Program mission is to provide training and work experiences to help special needs students secure employment in the community.

The Ashtabula Board of MR/DD submitted an Exemplary Youth Proposal and the Ashtabula County Private Industry Council and the County Commissioners approved the proposal for Job Training & Partnership Act funding. Happy Hearts teachers are implementing the Proposal with students in the Advanced classes.

Six students presently work in the housekeeping and laundry departments of the Ashtabula County Nursing Home for two hours a day. A teacher from Happy Hearts School supervises the students and coordinates with the County Home staff in providing on-the-job training. Eleven other students are working at Happy Hearts School in the food service and maintenance areas. Four of the students have already completed the initial training period while the remaining seven students continue to develop the skills necessary to enter the program's employment phase.

Besides the program's on-the-job training and employment phases, students also receive lessons in language, math, socialization, and self-help skills.

Parents of the students involved in the program work with their teachers to help develop the independence and necessary skills to find appropriate employment in the Ashtabula community.



## 1980s Events

*April 6, 1980. New members of the Ashtabula County Board of Mental Retardation, the Reverend Daniel Kulesa (left) and Mary Ellen Higley view a disassembling job being performed by Ash/Craft Workshop adults with adult services supervisor Larry Korland. Board members toured the workshop area that Korland says is in need of extra storage space*

*On the left, Brad Millspaugh and Lela Holcamp examine a bird's nest during a scavenger hunt on an overnight Happy Hearts School campout. Joe Dispenza, an*



*instructor, and student Tammy Hayes watch. About twenty-five teenagers participated in the program. They enjoyed a kickball game, sing-along, picnicking, and sleeping outside under tents. Photo by Sam Adamo. June 19, 1980.*

*The happy winner that created the name of the day camp, Camp Sunshine, is Missy Feke, pictured with director Russell Grippe at the final day's awards*



## 1980s Timeline

1980

25th Anniversary Open House

Maples II for girls opens, A.R.C. donates \$6,000.

Orff players perform at Deepwood Very Special Arts Festival.

1981

Dorothy Bishop retires.

The council purchases 9 sets of caps and gowns for upcoming graduation at a cost of \$112.50.

Two Mill levy passes.

1982

Revision of the Council's constitution was begun, changing its name to Ashtabula County Association for Retarded Citizens.

June 2, 1982. First formal school graduation was held, a dream which became a reality due to the work of the A.R.C.

1983

Orff players perform in Cleveland.

The annual Benefit dance for the Association for Retarded Citizens of Ashtabula planned by Sheila Woode, Charles Thomas, Rodney Stevens, Audrey Thomas, and Ann Lovas.

The dance will be held at Grotto Hall and Boss Music will provide music. Proceeds will go into a fund to be used for construction of a therapeutic play area for Happy Hearts School and Ash/Craft Industries.

March 15, 1983. Sherri Baumgardner and Diane Dickson made silk flower arrangements at Ash-Craft greenhouse. The arrangements were available for weddings and other occasions.

The greenhouse also sells fresh flowers wholesale and retail.

Ash/Craft Greenhouses featured a full line of geraniums, annuals, vegetables, hanging baskets, porch box planters, and more.

1984

\$2,000 raised to help pay for Orff band trip to Washington DC. as Ohio's representative to the Special Arts Festival. Orff Band performs at Kennedy Center and is on National Public Radio.

The program begins saving Campbell's labels.

First Winter Special Olympics games held at Swiss Haus in Madison.

1985

According to Ash/Craft Industries Director Larry Korland, recent expansion of the production facilities at the workshop will provide eighty-five more jobs for mentally retarded and developmentally disabled persons over the next three years.

1986

The 1986 Summer Day Camp begins on June 17th, 1986, and ends on Thursday, July 24th. In 1986, it included infants and their parents as well as school age children in the summer program.

In 1986, for the first time, Happy Hearts School and Ash/Craft will have full time physical therapy services. Debbie Hills began working in October of 1985 as a licensed Physical Therapist, and she will be working full time hours this year. The newest additions to the educational programming at Happy Hearts School, Infant Stimulation and Early Childhood Classes, have made some major changes in the programming.

The program formerly used only a school-based model with parents and family members bringing infants to school twice weekly. Now the infant stimulation teacher, physical therapist, speech therapist and psychologist meet with a baby once in the infant stimulation school setting and once in the home setting. Making home visits allows the teacher and parents to have some private time together to discuss personal needs of the family and how to enhance the home environment to better meet the stimulation needs of the baby.

1987

After Ashtabula County voters turned down an operating levy. It reopened in August after a reintroduced levy passed.

In 1987, Ash/Craft served 220 mentally retarded adults and Happy Hearts served 158 children from infants to age 21.

Russell Grippi became Happy Hearts' new principal in September.

December 23, 1987. The Ashtabula County Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities Board (169 Board) approved its 1988 budget of \$3,852,158.90 at its recent meeting. The new budget was financially identical to the 1986 budget said Board Superintendent Richard J. Cozza.

The Ashtabula County Board of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities initiated a campaign to provide crossing signals at the Green Road railroad grade crossing.

1988

Twelve students participated in a Training Program at the County Nursing Home funded by J.T.P.A.

The physical education teacher was now required to hold certification in the area of Adapted Physical Education.

County Early-Intervention Collaborative initiated.

Community Newsletter established.

Cynthia Phillips was named school principal.

The Special Olympics Booster Club persuaded operating engineers to place equipment in the field to begin work on the PARK.

The Ashtabula County Board of MR/DD presented Inez Gaumer with a plaque from the Ohio Association of County Boards of MR/DD, as well as a proclamation from the Ohio State Senate.

September 1. Teacher's Union (A.C.E.M.H.) strike averted.

1989

Lincoln satellite for preschoolers was established.

Twelve students participated in a training program at the County Nursing Home funded by J.T. P.A.

Mary Ellen Higley was hired as the school principal.

Ongoing residential providers meetings begin under Case Management.

The field between the school and Ash/Craft is transformed into three workable levels and the PARK becomes a reality.

The PARK was funded through not only local support, but also monies came from Texas, Georgia, Pennsylvania, Arizona, Florida, and Japan.

School Bus Safety Program Committee formed. "Hands Up For Bus Safety."

Theresa Spang, Special Olympic athlete, is selected to act as the torchbearer and will light the ceremonial torch at the State Games in Columbus.

Amy Turner, Special Olympic Skater, competes in the National Olympics in Philadelphia.

## Special Story: Edwina Payne, Mother of Many

Hats December 21, 1980

On December 21, 1980, a story by Lucille Donley, Ashtabula Sunday Paper Reporter, focused on the life of Edwina Payne of Andover, who had been selected as an "Outstanding Young Woman of America."

Edwina Lossee Payne, 33, said that she does not think she is any different than anyone else. In fact, she believes she is just doing her job. Edwina wears many hats while she is doing her job. She is a wife and mother, a homemaker and active in community activities. She works full time and meets the daily challenge of dealing physically and emotionally with a severely handicapped child, a husband, and two other children.

She is human enough to admit to having to get up in the morning, but realistically stating that “once my feet hit the floor, I’m moving.” She attributes her ability to daily navigate through her demanding schedule to a super husband, being organized, “and praying her way through a lot of situations.” According to Edwina, being organized is simply self-defense, because she gets frustrated when she is not organized. Her friends say that once Edwina gets an idea, it’s half done.

Edwina’s husband Robert is a plant manager at Bernel Foam Products in Chardon. They have three boys: Robert Jr., and Christian who are students in Pymatuning Valley School District and Daniel, who is a student at Happy Hearts School in North Kingsville.

Ten-year-old Daniel has taught the rest of his family valuable life lessons. He is microcephalic and motor and mentally retarded as well as having cerebral palsy, myocitic seizures and he has had his right eye removed. Edwina Payne accepts her son’s handicaps and encourages him to live the best life he can, setting a daily example for the rest of her family.

Daniel is in the primary division at Happy Hearts School and Edwina says that deciding to allow him “to get on that big yellow bus and go 30 miles away to school” is the hardest decision she ever made. She felt no one else would be able to get through to him because he has such trouble communicating. A friend told her that “you have to let him go away so you can have him come back.” Edwina Payne discovered that her friend’s advice proved to be correct.

### Blue Notes

On September 23, 1988, the Happy Hearts School and Ash/Craft Industries celebrated their 20th anniversary with a rededication and open house



## Chapter Five: Navigating the 1990s- New Agreements and New Programs

1990



### Happy Hearts Students Search for Litter in Lake Shore Park

*Lynda Perry, a Happy Hearts School Teacher, holds the bag for Curtis Lee who deposits a beer can he found while cleaning up Lake Shore Park. Photo by Carl E. Feather of the Ashtabula Star Beacon. May 19, 1990*

More than forty Happy Hearts School students braved blustery winds and cold temperatures early on a Friday May morning to pick up litter in Lake Shore Park. Cindy Philips, Daily Living Skills

Teacher, developed the community service project, and the Lakeshore Park cleanup is in its final phase. She said she did the project with the four classes of advanced students at Happy Hearts to show them how they can contribute to the community and that they too, could make a difference. “Everyone always does something for Happy Hearts,” she said, and she wanted to help students give back.

With the help of teachers and volunteers, the students ranging in age from 16-22, fine-tooth-combed Lake Shore Park for litter. They searched bushes, trees, paths, and playgrounds for paper and trash, stowing it away in bags that grew too heavy for the strong winds to snatch. Cindy said that the teachers and volunteers had planned a picnic to finish the project, but they had to reschedule it at the school because of the frigid weather.

The students started their Community Service project last March by donating \$300 that they had earned by cooking and selling lunch to the school staff to the American Red Cross. Other parts of the Community Service Project have involved cooking a meal for the Exchange Club and holding an Easter Egg hunt for the preschool. Cindy said completing different projects “teaches

them to be responsible and show them that they have purpose and benefit to the community,” Phillips said.

As the students worked through these community projects, they also developed a different attitude toward giving. Cindy said when they first began earning money they wanted to keep it. As they completed projects, they wanted to know who needed donations. “They’ve really developed an awareness that the money is not just there for them,” Cindy said.



*Brrr! Cold winds blowing off Lake Erie Friday morning necessitated warm clothes, even blankets, for Jenny Richardson and other students participating in the project. Carl Feather took the photos for the Ashtabula Star Beacon.*

*Curtis Lee keeps trash from blowing in the fierce wind swooping in like the airborne gull from Lake Erie*



### **Ash/Craft for All Seasons**



Ash/Craft Industries, Inc.

The Ashtabula County Sentinel of August 2, 1990, featured profiles of Ashtabula County Industries, including Ash/Craft Industries, Ashtabula County’s Sheltered Workshop. Ash/Craft worked with well-established companies and incoming

businesses helping them solve their work problems while providing jobs for special needs workers. Some of the jobs the workers at Ash/Craft perform include all types of packaging and assembly work, commercial sewing work, woodworking, silk screening, bulk and promotional mailing and catalog collating.

As well as industrial jobs, Ash/Craft operates a greenhouse that offers seasonal and silk flowers, houseplants and garden plants on a wholesale and retail basis.

Ash/Craft was located in Happy Hearts School until 1978, when it moved to a new facility on Green Road, north of Happy Hearts. By 1984, Ash/Craft had found it necessary to begin work on an addition, doubling the square footage of the Workshop to approximately 45,000 square feet, including the greenhouse. The Workshop moved into its new quarters in 1985.

At the time it moved to its new quarters in 1978 Ash/Craft had seventy-five workers, but that number had more than doubled by August 1990. Workers are picked up in the same bus runs as Happy Hearts School.

### **Ashtabula County Mental Retardation/Developmental Disabilities Board Reflects Budget Changes**

In a December 2, 1990, story, Ashtabula County Sentinel Staff Writer John A. Childress wrote that Richard J. Cozza, Jr., Superintendent of the Ashtabula County Board of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities reported that the Board would enter 1991 with a new set of responsibilities that its budget had to reflect. "It used to be all we had to worry about was how we would run our school and workshop programs," he said. "The state is requiring us to become more responsible for what services the clients get, their housing, and a host of other items we've not had to consider before."

According to Superintendent Cozza, the 1991 budget must reflect changes in the law as well as needs to be met. The November 1990 passage of a 0.5 mill operating levy that will generate about \$450,000 will make it easier to enact the budget. The changes in the law include new staff levels, including ten additional bus aides, an early childhood level teacher, two early childhood classroom aides, and a transportation clerical employee.

In addition, the levy funds will be used to make specific capital improvements of about \$250,00 over a three-year period. Superintendent Cozza said the Board plans

to spend about \$75,000 per year on these improvements.

Superintendent Cozza projects that the anticipated revenues for 1991 will be slightly more than \$4.7 million dollars. This includes \$2.9 million from tax levies; \$544,400 from the state Department of MRDD; \$819,050 from the State Department of Education; \$363,950 from federal programs; and \$37,000 from other revenue.

## **Tote Bags and Transportation Safety**

May 25, 1991

Happy Hearts pupils and Ash/Craft Industries workers created safety problems when they carried many personal possessions to school and work with them and cluttered the bus aisles.

To solve this problem, bus driver Cheryl Lutes and bus aid Verna Osburn submitted the idea of making tote bags with the bus safety logo on them to the School Bus Safety Program Committee. Passengers could use the tote bags to carry their possessions so they would not clutter up the aisles.

The Committee liked the idea and Ash/Craft sewing group employees began making the bags. Using the theme "Bus Safety: It's in the Bag," the Workshop made the bags available to students, clients, and staff to purchase.

Linda Porcello, MRDD Board Transportation Coordinator, said although bus safety week is in October, the clients and students observe bus safety day the first Wednesday of every month. On bus safety day, bus personnel reinforce safety rules, including the five basic bus safety rules which are:

Be quiet at railroad crossings.

Sit down when the bus is moving.

Look three ways before crossing the street.

Keep the aisles clear.

Keep good behavior.

"I am very proud of our passengers, because once they know the rules they make sure that their fellow passengers enforce them. They are very good with these rules and I am very proud of them. The general population does not know that our population can learn and does," Transportation Director Porcello said.

Bus safety does not only apply to passengers, but it also applies to motorists who according to state law must stop 10 feet away from a bus when it is loading or unloading. But when the yellow lights are on, a motorist knows they can pass or get ready to stop because the bus is about to load or unload. “We do get a lot of violators who can be prosecuted and fined in our particular program, we get violators due to the nature of the passengers,” Director Porcello said. “Wheelchairs take time to load and unload and some people stop and some do not.”

## **Ash/Craft is Audited Every Year**



July 13, 1991

According to Ashtabula County Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities Board Superintendent Richard J. Cozza, Jr., the MR/DD Board should receive the results of its yearly audit from the Ash/Craft Board by September. He said the audit is a housekeeping procedure for Ash/Craft, but the MR/DD Board receives the audit results because of its obvious relationship with Ash/Craft.

Although Ash/Craft does not use public funds, the Board conducts an audit every year to make sure its records are in order. The budget is made up of money received through work contracts.

Ash/Craft, which is similar to a school program for handicapped adults, was created in the 1970s. It employs about two hundred handicapped adults for contract work. The Ash/Craft work training program prepares clients either for competitive employment or for sheltered employment. When Ash/Craft was created, an issue of who would pay the salaries of the two hundred employees and for the equipment they used was raised.

Superintendent Cozza said the Ash/Craft Board was created as the entity to pay the workers. It is a private, non-profit board, which employs the handicapped members at Ash/Craft. The Ash/Craft Board obtains contracts from companies according to fair employment laws so jobs are not taken from others in the community. The Ash/Craft Board uses the money from those contracts to pay the employees and purchase equipment and materials needed for present or future contracts. He said the Board's budget is compiled of money from contracts and each year an audit

must be conducted as a “good business practice.”

He added that since there is a relationship between the MRDD Board and the Ash/Craft Board, the audit findings are provided to the MRDD board every year. The Ash/Craft Board is primarily made up of people from chambers of commerce, the business community and others in the community interested in helping. “Someone had their head on straight when they were deciding who should pay these employees. MR/DD could not pay them because then they would have become civil servants and been paid with public funds,” Superintendent Cozza said.

He said since the money to pay the workers is from contracts, county money goes toward other programs that are directly funded by MR/DD. “We have been really careful to make sure the handicapped employees are paid from the contracts, not county money. No tax money is used to pay a client a wage for what they do and they are not competing for jobs in Ashtabula County.”

### **MRDD to Introduce Whole Language Approach**

July 14, 1991

A new computerized language program will begin this school year at Happy Hearts School which will use a whole language approach to teaching handicapped children.

The new IBM computerized language program has been used in a few areas around the county and Ashtabula County will be one of the pioneers in using his program said Richard J. Cozza, Jr., superintendent of the Ashtabula County Board of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities. “We really want to see if the computerized language program could work with these students,” he said. “The program should be in place by this August when the school year starts.”

He said that over the past two years, there has been an attempt to use a whole language approach to education with students ages 12 to 21 at the school and that this whole language approach has become a success with handicapped children. In the whole language approach, everything is language oriented and there is more discussion in the classroom when lessons are being taught. “Everything is language oriented and the kids discuss more,” he said. “In many cases, if they had more language skills they would function better in the community because they would be better able to express themselves.”

The computer system, hardware, software, and the classroom modifications for the program will cost about \$9,600. The MRDD Board has approved funds for the project to be used from donations to the board.

Superintendent Cozza said since the whole language program has been successful so far in the classrooms, it was decided to give the computer program a try. He said this computer language program is relatively new and Ashtabula County will be one of the first places to have multi-handicapped children on a regular schedule using the program. He predicted there should be some results from the program by the end of the school year after the children have been able to use the program for a while.

According to Superintendent Cozza, there has been a lot of positive feedback from parents whose children are being taught through the whole language program. "Some parents have said they have noticed their children's ability to express themselves has improved," he said. "We have also seen that when there are dramatic improvements made in their language skills, there are improvements in other areas as well."

### **First Autistic Class at Happy Hearts March 8, 1992**

Class brings change to autistic students  
Nancy Erikson

Working with the first ever all autistic children class at Happy Hearts School, preschool teacher Penny Ellis and her assistant Pam Coates have seen changes for the better in their students.

The Autism Society of Ohio defines autism as a brain disorder, present from birth, which affects the way the brain uses information. Although the cause of autism is still unknown, some research suggests a physical problem affecting those parts of the brain that process language and information coming in from the senses. Experts believe there may be some imbalance of certain chemicals in the brain and genetic factors may sometimes be involved.

The Autism Society of Ohio claims that autism may result from a combination of several causes, but no factors in the psychological environment of the child cause autism.

Teacher Penny Ellis said that up until this year, children with autism were mixed in with other classes at Happy Hearts. Then four children around the same age came to the school and it was decided they would be grouped into a class by themselves. Penny Ellis and Pam Coates were asked to work with the class, which has four children ranging in age from three to five years old. The class meets three half-days a week. “” We have seen such a difference in them. All concerned have said this is the way to go,” Penny Ellis said.

Each child has an Individualized Education Plan that the teacher Ellis and her aide Pam Coates follow. Many of the skills they teach are self-help skills such as dressing, language, hygiene, and understanding the world around them. Penny Ellis said that the main objective is chiseling away at the communication barrier the children have with the rest of the world. “The children are normally intelligent with their biggest obstacle being the communication barrier,” she said.

When the class began, teacher Ellis kept the sensory stimulus at a minimum so the children could adjust. She credits much of the success of the class to the support she receives from her teacher aide Pam Coates and the other school staff. As with all the students we are hoping to mainstream them, but we will have to wait and see how each one reacts,” she said. “They are so individual, but we’d sure want them to use all the potential they’ve got.”

## **From New Directions**

**Fall 1992**

### **A Community Newsletter of the Ashtabula County Board of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities**

Trivia Tidbits

by Linda Porcello

Bet you did not know that the Ashtabula County Board of MR/DD employs 155 full-time staff and over forty substitutes.

Bet you didn’t know that the Ash/Craft greenhouse sells over 7,500 geraniums every Spring.

Bet you did not know that the Ash/Craft woodshop built and sold over 190 picnic tables in 1991 and 1992.

Bet you did not know the number of people that our Board serves is in excess of 690 including Happy Hearts School, Ash/Craft Workshop, Community Employment, Supportive Home Services and Case Management.

Bet you did not know that Ash/Craft greenhouse sells over 3,500 poinsettia plants



at Christmas time.

Bet you did not know that our buses travel 1,680 miles daily on a school day and 1,204 miles daily on a “workshop only” day.

*Good News!! For the first time in what seems like ages, new equipment will be*



*coming for the Ash/Craft greenhouse. A new “seeder” will save money because we will plant seeds to make “plugs” (tiny starter plants) instead of buying them. A germination chamber and a fertilizer injector will also be added..*

### **Ash/Craft Industries May Expand Services April 27, 1993**

Ash/Craft Industries is hoping to use \$190,000 in Medicaid funds to expand facilities and offer services to more clients.

Richard Cozza, Superintendent at Ash/Craft, recently learned that the sheltered workshop, which serves mentally retarded and developmentally disabled adults in Ashtabula County is eligible for 70 percent state funding for an expansion project. “We’re eligible for 70 percent funding from the state due to the economics of Ashtabula County,” he said.

According to Superintendent Cozza, the project, estimated to cost \$667,000, would add a workshop and four or five additional classrooms in a 7,500 square foot expansion to the facility. He said that presently there is not enough room for all the clients Ash/Craft is serving and there are fifty additional people in the Workshop all paid for by Medicaid, but there is also a need for capital improvements.

The Superintendent added that two years ago, the State of Ohio allowed Medicaid funds to pay for services at Ash/Craft and these funds would be used for the school’s portion of the building project with no tax dollars used. He said that Ash/Craft serves five hundred clients in Ashtabula County, but a waiting list has existed for years and so far, Ash/Craft has not been able to serve more people. He estimated that the additional cost for the expansion to serve fifty new people will

be minimal. Costs would be in utility and maintenance only. No new staff will be hired for the expansion.

“By next fall, we hope to have \$190,000 saved in Medicaid funds for the local match of the project,” Superintendent Cozza said. “It will be another six months before we’re ready to go with this project, and hopefully we can have it completed next spring.”

### **Teacher Barbara Turchetta Receives Grant for Sex Education Program at Happy Hearts**

June 1993

Happy Hearts teacher Barbara Turchetta recently applied for and received a \$200 grant from the Marketing Our Schools Committee to pay for staff and parent training to help students learn about human sexuality.

Barbara Turchetta said she was inspired to apply for the grant after reading a letter from the parent of a 13-year-old boy in her class, asking that her son receive sex education. The grant enables Happy Hearts School to bring in outside help, such as a nurse who has experience in the area. Parents will be included through the entire planning process. “Although it’s a very private matter, and parents should be involved, the teachers owe it to the parents to help in any way they can,” she said.

She explained that the school sent out letters to the parents of all of the sixty-four intermediate and advanced students and it received 25 to 30 positive responses. Students were excused if their parents did not want them to take the class, and all parents were invited to a planning session.

MR/DD Board Superintendent Richard Cozza agreed with establishing the class. He recalled that he written a human sexuality curriculum when he taught family life and human development in the Montgomery County Schools in Maryland. He taught multiple-handicapped children. “Toward adulthood they will be living and working in the community. They will be living less sheltered lives. They are involved in the community these days. They need to know about it.”

He also recognized that teaching these children presented more of a challenge than students in a conventional classroom. “A lot depends on the kids. A lot of them will never understand the physical part of it, but they can understand the emotions. It is very individual, based on what the child can understand.”

## **Happy Hearts Teachers and Staff Strike September 28, 1993**

Members of the Ashtabula County Employees Association for the Mentally Handicapped went on strike late Monday night, September 27, after rejecting the latest contract offer by the Board of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities. The Union represents 108 members, including teachers, teacher assistants, nursing, speech and physical therapy staff, workshop specialists, workshop aids and bus assistants. The strike affects about 170 students at Happy Hearts School and 220 clients at Ash/Craft Workshop.

The Union contends that salaries, insurance, vacancies, and assignments are the important issues. The Ashtabula Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities Board responded that the Union's demands were above what any school district paid and that the Board cannot afford to meet the Union's demands. Ninety-five percent of the Union membership marched on the picket lines, peacefully blocking the path of employees arriving for work at the school.

"This is the first-time union members have ever went on strike. It was a difficult decision for the membership to make," Union spokeswoman Elaine Marcy said. "We offered the union a 2 percent, 3 percent and 3 percent raise over the next three years" said Richard Cozza Board Superintendent. "We also offered an increase in longevity pay. The current pay is \$500 for every four years; we offered to increase it to \$750 for every four years. This is the top of the scale and they will not even take it back to the union."

Board Superintendent Cozza said union representatives refused the contract proposal and opted to strike after the board refused to meet their demands. The union wanted 5 percent, 4 percent, 4 percent over the next three years," he said. Union President Elaine Marcy said, "The association is disappointed by the lack of respect given us and the children whose service is being disrupted." She said that "over the last three years Superintendent Cozza has receive an 18-percent increase in salary. The administration and staff got a thirteen ½ percent increase over the last three years and they continue to receive a 3-4- and 5 percent raise every year. What we are asking for is not out of line. We are at the bottom of the salary scale in this county. We want to get to the middle of it at least."

Contract negotiations have been going on since the original three-year contract expired in August. The employees have been working under a contract extension pending negotiations.

Most parents remarked that they wished the two sides could have hammered out a contract without a strike. "My son will stay home until the strike is settled," Inez Gaumer, president of the Association for Retarded Citizens, said. Another parent, Nadine Moroski, a founding parent of Happy Hearts School, said she supported the teachers. "I do not like to see the strike. This is the first time in all the years we have had the school that there was a strike. I do not like to see it because the children and the clients suffer. I hope the Board will reconsider on some of the issues and end the strike."

The Happy Hearts School-Ash/Craft Industries strike officially ended on Wednesday, October 6, 1993, when union members met Wednesday morning to vote on the contract proposed by the Board of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities. The union ratified the tentative agreement by a secret ballot vote of 82 to 19. The board will meet at 4 p.m. today to vote on the contract.

The Board of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities and union officials reached a tentative agreement on a new contract Tuesday evening after negotiating 11 hours.

"While many members expressed a belief that the board could and should do better, this was a defensive strike," said Elaine Marcy, union spokeswoman. "The association went on strike to protect its contract and to prevent further cuts in its fringe benefits. We succeeded in that goal. There will be no more cuts in fringe benefits."

Marcy said wages were not the issue and that the strike was not over wages. Cozza said teachers and staff took time Wednesday to clean up classrooms and prepare for the arrival of students today.

"The teachers are back in the classroom today (Wednesday) but Thursday and Friday will be regular classroom days with the clients," Superintendent Cozza said. The parents of students said they were happy to see the students returning to school. Most parents were concerned with their children having their routines altered by staying out of school.

"I'm glad the strike is over and they could come to a compromise," said Pam Esposito. Esposito's daughter is autistic and a student at Happy Hearts.

"I am happy the teachers got what they wanted with benefits. My daughter is autistic and nonverbal but I am sure she will be happy to back in her usual routine."

Another parent, Robin Coxon, said she was relieved the strike had ended for both parties' sake. She said her son, who is autistic, needs to be back in school so he can build on his socialization skills.

1994

**“We Are One in the Spirit”**

February 3, 1994



*Inez Gaumer delivers the message during the Sunday morning Interfaith Service for Mentally Retarded. People in Fellowship Hall at First Presbyterian Church in Ashtabula on January 30, 1994.*

Attendance at Inez Gaumer's Interfaith Sunday School Classes for Mentally Retarded people at First Presbyterian Church in Ashtabula dropped on the next to the last day of January 1994. She was slightly surprised, but not discouraged, remarking that the program usually enjoyed faithful attendance from mentally retarded and developmentally disabled people bused in from group homes and residences throughout Ashtabula and the county. "Their attendance is tremendous. It must mean a lot to them because they come every Sunday," she said.

For Inez, every Sunday has meant 25 years' worth of Sundays of service to the disabled community. The mother of a special needs child herself, Inez founded the program with the encouragement and help of the pastors of the church at the time, Reverend George Johnson and Richard Baker and assistance from Dorothy Sparks. Gene Moroski, one of the original parent group who founded Happy Hearts, joined the class a few years later and provides the music.

According to Inez, the class has grown from a small group to thirty-eight students. Four of the students, Claude Gaumer; Larry Moroski; Danny Brunell; and John Pickett have attended the class since its beginning in 1969. Margie Rihn, former

First Presbyterian Christian Education coordinator, said many of the class members have been coming to the classes since they were teenagers.

“We run the gamut,” Inez said. “In the past we have had younger students, but right now twenty-eight is our youngest. We have had them from eight on up.”

A past president of the local Association for Retarded Persons and a trustee of the state organization, Inez believes that interfaith services strive to make worship and the Christian life understandable and accessible. “I think the mentally retarded have a right to religious education, just as anybody else,” she said. “If we fail to recognize the special gifts people with disabilities possess, we are missing part of God’s message for us.”

### Happy Hoopsters



*The Happy Hearts Varsity Basketball Team posed for its team photo after completing their season.*

*Finishing with a five hundred record for the season, the team will play the Happy Hearts faculty team as a finale. Front from left are Nick Marsh; Doug Dragon; Jacob Zelczer; Michael Emery; and Luis Perez. Back row from left are Coach Pam Keep; Ron Turner; David Baker; Dan Hunt; Manager William Griswold; Frank Johnson; and*

*assistant coach Brent Woerner. March 17, 1994. Ashtabula Star Beacon photo by Jim Matthews.*

## **The Park – Japan, Richard Cozza, Dick Flower, Stan Gaumer, and Ashtabula**



### **County (1993-1995)**

#### **New Park Planned**

Argenteri Associates, architects, and planners have prepared preliminary drawings for a community park and playground that will serve the Kingsville community and Happy Hearts School and Ash/Craft Sheltered Workshop. The park would be developed on about eight acres between the school and workshop and could be a joint project of county and local governments, private individuals, and the Ashtabula County Board of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities, according to Richard J. Cozza Board Superintendent who asked the Board to review the plans.

The drawings feature a terraced slope extending from the school to the workshop, with a playground, ballfield, a court for basketball and paddleball, a pavilion, a track, and field that could be used for the Special Olympics, a track with exercise stations, and a picnic area.

Superintendent Cozza said the architect's drawings illustrated the dreams that many people have had for the field for many years. He suggested establishing a foundation to develop the project and gather donations. He estimated the park project could cost about \$100,000 spread over a period of five years. "I think this can be a community project the Board can work on with other people," he said.

The new Special Olympics Park behind Happy Hearts School came about through international and local contributions and the donations and efforts of hundreds of

volunteers.

In an Ashtabula Star Beacon story dated June 10, 1993, Carl Feather profiled W. Richard “Dick” Flower, Ashtabula resident and one of the founders of “The Park” behind Happy Hearts School. Ash/Craft parent Stan Gaumer was another major contributor of hundreds of volunteer hours.

The Fall 1995 MRDD Board newsletter New Directions credits the Miagowa family of Japan, owner of the Rex International Corporation, and Wheeler Manufacturing with donating substantially to the pavilion development. The Famiko Miagowa Pavilion recognized the efforts of the family matriarch, a leader in advocating for the disabled in Japan. Sandy Coblitz of Wheeler also made substantial contributions to creating the Park. The students at the Ashtabula County Joint Vocational School rebuilt the International Cub Cadet riding mower used to keep the field in order, using parts that International provided at zero net cost.

Dick Flower and Stan Gaumer coordinated the efforts of hundreds of Ashtabula County residents who made the dream of the new park for Special Olympians in the community a reality. Dick Flower discovered pavilion blueprints filed and forgotten behind a filing cabinet and he and Stan Gaumer instantly recognized their



potential for the community. “We should have more of this in Ashtabula County for our kids to do these things. They may be mentally retarded, but they are not stupid. this is a good outlet for them.”

After weeks of preparation, meetings, consultation with Ashtabula County Commissioners, hundreds of 000 thousands of dollars worth of volunteer work, and cash and material donations, the Park took shape. Volunteers ran bulldozers, dug holes, delivered lumber, and donated time and money. The end results included a ballfield, a track, and a park pavilion.

Little league teams, softball teams, church groups, t-ball teams, and others reserve the field and use it on nearly a daily basis. The Special Olympics softball team spent the summer practicing and playing their scheduled games on the field. The one-seventh of a mile paved track provides a place to walk, jog, or run.



Two major projects that still need to be completed are a waterproof floor in the pavilion and paving the parking lot as soon as enough donors and volunteers can be obtained. Donors of time, money, and materials will be listed on a sign marking the entrance to the Park and everyone who donated trees, shrubs, and other items are identified on a schematic on the outside of the pavilion's entry wall.

The Dedication and Open House for The Park was held on September 18, 1993. The Fall 1995 issue of New Directions article said that the final version of The Park was turned over to the Ashtabula County Board of MR/DD "which will insure its ongoing improvement and maintenance."



#### Preparing for Birds

*The Bluebird of happiness might pay a visit to the park between Happy Hearts School and Ash/Craft Industries if the students and clients have their way. Superintendent Richard Cozza (left) helps Tom Misch mount a bluebird house in the park's apple orchard off Green Road in Kingsville Township as spring approaches and the birds return. Ashtabula Star Beacon photo by Jim Matthews.*



#### **Happy Hearts and Ash/Craft Mark Forty Years of Operation**

*Richard Cozza has been superintendent of Ashtabula County Board of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities for ten years. Ashtabula Star Beacon photo by Diana Lewis. March 16, 1995.*

Happy Hearts School has changed since 1954. Forty years later school continues to evolve as it serves the special needs of the developmentally disabled citizens of Ashtabula. Today the school has an enrollment of 150 children, aged from birth to twenty-one. Another 250 developmentally disabled adults are affiliated with Ash/Craft, a sheltered workshop built in 1978 adjacent to Happy Hearts School.

The inception of the school and its subsequent growth are the product of many years of struggle and dedication, said Richard Cozza superintendent of the Ashtabula County Board of Mental Retardation

“Back in the ‘50s, children were excluded from school,” he said. “It was little grass roots groups of people who began to spring up saying, ‘This is not right.’ It really turned out to be a human rights issue. “In March 1954, about nine families with disabled children formed the Ashtabula County Council for Retarded Children. It was exactly one year later when one instructor and one assistant began teaching the children of those families. The local group funded the school with weekly tuition payments of six dollars per child and fund raisers such as bake sales.

“They were out beating the bushes trying to get things going. Eventually, the public began recognizing developmentally disabled citizens’ right to an education. At that point, changes began happening rapidly, both locally and on a national level,” Superintendent Cozza said.

### **Happy Hearts Adds Another Satellite Classroom June 21, 1995**

In the fall, seven Happy Hearts students will spend their school day at Wallace H. Braden Junior High School in Ashtabula Township. They range in age from 12 to 17 and they are chosen by ability levels. The Braden room will resemble the two-year-old St. John Model, with its own teacher and teacher’s assistant. Their teacher will be Alice Cook, and Barb Carpenter will assist.

The Ashtabula County Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities Board which runs Happy Hearts also has two satellite preschool units at Buckeye’s Lincoln School and a classroom at St. John High School. The program is just one of Happy Hearts efforts to integrate its students with regular education children.

**Ice Berg...Dead Ahead!**  
**New Directions, Summer 1996**  
**by Richard J. Cozza, Jr. Superintendent**

The icy waters of state and federal support for people with disabilities are becoming even more turbulent right now, and there are rumors of icebergs and storms on the horizon. The danger is coming both from Washington and from Columbus, and they bear close watching by all of us.

We've all followed the budget discussions in Washington concerning the Medicaid program, which plays a large part in the lifelog needs of people with disabilities. We all know that the federal budget must be controlled and that the Medicaid program must be slowed, but be careful. A managed care Medicaid program developed in haste and by compromise can leave people with long term care needs at the bottom of the priority list. And that often is the fate of people with disabilities when they have to compete with others in the system.

In addition, there is talk in Columbus of changing the human services system to one Medicaid- driven human services mega-agency, which again would place people with disabilities at the bottom of the priority list by virtue of numbers alone. So, be vigilant. Yes, support the control of federal spending, which we all know we must do for financial responsibility, but be aware of how both Washington and Columbus are talking about long-term care for people with disabilities and how they propose to manage a system of care and services. The differences in the proposals are like night and day, and some don't even mention this group at all. Let your federal and state law makers know of your concern and that you have heard the rumors of significant change and that you are concerned. Ask your representative to keep you informed as proposals are made.

Remember that this new State Legislature is made up of many brand-new lawmakers who have not had contact with parents or County Board or MR/DD staff. Services for people with disabilities are not well known to them as they were with our former, more experienced legislators. They need to hear from us (and they are) if they are to have any idea of what we have worked so hard to build over the past 40 years. Just as those founding parents did years ago, the assistance and contact of our families, staff and friends now will have a similar effect on the future of services through the year 2000 and beyond.

## **Possible Financial Disaster for Happy Hearts and Ash/Craft: November and December 1996**

November 13, 1996. Ashtabula County Board of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities Superintendent Richard Cozza wrote a three-page letter to Happy Hearts and Ash/Craft staff and parents advising them that financial disaster threatened to halt their program, and that he and the MR/DD Board were going to have to make some tough decisions. In his letter, he detailed 18 months of “consistently bad financial news” and said that payrolls and benefits hopefully are covered through the end of 1996, but we are holding bills to protect our staffing expenses.”

He said that the Board’s 1996 revenue will likely be \$100,000 less than projected and that the board could expect an additional \$100,000 decrease in 1997.

He wrote that any bills left unpaid so late in the year create an instant deficit for 1997, which already was shaping up to be plagued with ongoing financial woes. He felt that he and the administrative team and the Board should come up with a solution to the finances, but he thought that this crisis, created by economics, was bigger than everyone and everyone had to pull together to solve it or come up with alternatives.

The reasons Superintendent Cozza cited for the unrelenting financial concerns included a poor tax-base which places Ashtabula County on the bottom third of counties statewide on a per-mill basis. “That means, to run the same cost program as a wealthier county, we need more local taxes to do it,” he wrote. He also noted a larger client population. “We simply have more clients to serve with the local tax money we have,” he wrote.

In his letter, Superintendent Cozza suggested that the staff and board work together to come up with alternatives.” We have no room for error in the judgements we will have to make and the trust we will have to put in each other. Alienation and bad feelings will prove to be our undoing.” He concluded the letter by saying, “Good luck to all of us.”

## **Task Force Probing MR/DD November 26, 1996**

Ashtabula County Commissioners appointed a special task force to investigate the Ashtabula County Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities Board

program, intent on discovering how the agency racked up a \$700,000 deficit in the past year. The seven-member task force will meet and begin reviewing MR/DD records and interviewing staff.

Task force members include newly-appointed MR/DD Board members Tom Nassief, Robert Taylor, and Ronald Tate; Claudia Conway, a former MR/DD staff member; Kelly Bastanian, a parent of an MR/DD client; Roger Corlett, certified public accountant; and Jeanne Bento, Ashtabula County Commissioner.

The task force will study the operation of the MR/DD, examine its participant levels, the services it is required to offer and review current and projected appropriations,” said George Distel, Ashtabula County Commissioner. “We’re expecting this to be a short-term effort, hopefully the task force will be done with their work by January or so.”

Commissioners said they were concerned over reports MR/DD programs are in financial crisis and felt a task force would be able to move more quickly to get answers.

### **MR/DD Gets Emergency Financial Boost November 27, 1996**

A story by Mark Owens in the Jefferson Gazette notes that the Ashtabula County Board of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities received a budget reprieve at least until the end of the year. Facing a \$700,000 shortfall at the end of this year, the program received about \$410,500 in advances and allocations from various agencies to meet payroll and contract service obligations through the beginning of 1997.

Ashtabula County Commissioners made an emergency appropriate to the Board on Tuesday, allowing the MR/DD Board to move \$91,500 from its gifts account to its general fund. The money will come from three funds established through the board. Two of them are longstanding funds, The Winger and Burlington Trust Funds and the Trustees Fund.

Board Superintendent Richard Cozza told Commissioners that donations made to the funds with specific directions for their use will not be part of the allocations. The balance of the funds, as of this week, totaled nearly \$120,000.

The remaining emergency funding comes from the state MR/DD program in the

amount of \$250,000 and an advance of delinquent tax monies from the Ashtabula County Auditor's Office in the amount of \$69,000. The money is either an advance from the MR/DD Board's anticipated 1997 revenue or an allocation of existing MR/DD funds. Ashtabula County Commissioners noted that no extra county funds were used in Tuesday's appropriation.

The emergency appropriations will not cancel the layoff notices and cutbacks in the MR/DD programs. About sixteen positions are slated to be cut from Happy Hearts and Ash/Craft Industries and other cutbacks may also be necessary.

### **Looking at Levies**

MR/DD Plans to Place Levy on May Ballot February 7, 1997

Ashtabula County Board of Mental Retardation/Developmental Disabilities members decided to seek a 0.5 mill seven-year renewal levy on the May Ballot. If the voters approve it, the levy will replace a similar one that expires at the end of 1997. The new levy will generate about \$500,000 per year for seven years.

### **MR/DD Management Committee Meets**

**March 5, 1997**

The new Ashtabula County Mental Retardation/Developmental Disabilities Board mostly considered finances at its March meeting. Board member Robert Taylor said that the Board would consider any proposal that would save some money between now and December 31 and encourage the members of the new management committee to keep their ears open.

Board President Thomas Nassief and Board member Taylor both said that they were concerned that the MR/DD Board would have trouble stretching its 1997 money to the end of the year, in spite of the permanent staff cutbacks that the previous board made to get through the final months of 1996.

President Nassief pressed board treasurer Vickie Martin for figures on the possible shortfall from its 1996 budget. The Board has renewal of one of its two levies on the ballot in May. Together, the two county-wide levies provide 54 percent of the Board's budget.

MR/DD staff presentations seemed to add instead of subtract from the Board's budget woes. Mechanic Mike Kushma informed the Board that the underground gas tank by the Ash/Craft parking lot would probably need to be removed within

the year to comply with Environmental Protection Agency rules. Superintendent Richard Cozza said that an estimate he had gotten a few years before said that it would cost between \$3,000 and \$5,000 to remove the tank and no money had been factored into the budget for its removal.

Will Paeden spoke for the Early Intervention Services for children up to age three. He told the Committee that any cuts in early intervention would directly affect the level of therapy services to the children. He said that no one else in Ashtabula County could meet the needs of the children or had a mandate to provide early intervention services. "These kids need those services. If they did not need them, they would not be in the system."

Ash/Craft Director Larry Korland told the Board that eleven of the adults who had just a few months ago received services at Ash/Craft now received a lesser degree of help at home because of the cutback. He said that the program has grown 400 percent since he began there 20 years ago, and that the adults currently in the program need a much greater level of service.

According to Larry Korland, in 1976, none of the adults at the facility workshop needed help feeding themselves in the cafeteria or with other basic tasks. Now all of those adults are working in the community, and the adults at Ash/Craft need that level of assistance.

### **MR/DD Board Passes Budget December 25, 1997, Jefferson Gazette**

The Ashtabula County Board of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities passed a budget last week at its December 16 Board meeting. The budget featured general fund appropriations totaling \$6.2 million, \$500,000 less than the 1996 budget. Superintendent Richard Cozza said that the \$500,000 reduction should allow the Board to cover 1997 expenses with existing revenue.

The majority of MR/DD cuts came from a reduction in staff approved at the previous board meeting. In addition to the \$400,000 cut in salary and associated costs. Superintendent Cozza proposed reducing board expenses by cutting back on physical and speech therapy contracted out by the Board. The Superintendent's other cost-cutting proposals included shifting the cost of educating two school units of 32 children to the regular schools and having the regular school districts pay for the transportation of Happy Hearts students.

The December 16 Board meeting was the last for several MR/DD Board members. “This has been the best board I have worked with in the 17 to 18 years I have worked with boards. You are going to be missed and I am proud to have worked with you,” Superintendent Cozza said.

Jean Fields, President of the Board, in a telephone conversation said that in a story appearing in the December 11 Gazette, she was unfairly characterized as being “hostile” to the task force which is charged with reviewing the financial status of the Board. She said that the task force members met two weeks ago at Happy Hearts. “This is a good thing to bring the task force and new board members up to speed. We are an informed board. The superintendent inundates us with information every week.”

Addressing the current situation where the MR/DD Board has had to lay off personnel in order to deal with the projected budget deficit, Jean Fields said “the situation is not one of mismanagement. We lost promised funding.”

## **1998**

### **Health Care Savings Passed on To MMRD Employees**

A story in the Jefferson Gazette dated July 1, 1998, by reporter Craig L. Hofius reported that Happy Hearts teachers, teacher aides, Ash/Craft Workshop staff and bus aides-employees of the Ashtabula County Board of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities-approved a three-year tentative contract. The Board, which also has to approve the contract, is expected to do so within the week. The new contract, affecting 105 Board employees, features raises in each of the three years. The raises will be five percent in each of the first two years and four percent in the third year.

Negotiations with the employee’s union, The Ashtabula County Employees Association for the Mentally Handicapped which is affiliated with the Ohio Education Association, began in the spring.

## **Blue Notes**

### **Fall , 1992**

**The number of people that our Board serves is in excess of 690 including Happy Hearts School, Ash/Craft Workshop, Community Employment, Supportive Home Services and Case Management.**





**1999**

**Superintendent Cozza Resigns and Takes  
A Job in Toledo**

*Saying Goodbye! Richard Cozza, Mental Retardation and Developmentally Disabled Superintendent, enjoys cake with Happy Hearts student Brittany Prince during a*

*farewell party for Superintendent Cozza at the school on March 10, 1999. Ashtabula Star Beacon photo by Bill West.*

A story in the Jefferson Gazette by Craig L. Hofius dated March 10, 1999, provided details of Superintendent Cozza's resignation from the Ashtabula County Board of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities. Superintendent Cozza resigned on February 18, 1999, after 13 years as Superintendent to take a new position as Executive Director of Community Living Options, Inc. in Toledo.

He considers his new position in Toledo a step up in his career and probably his last job. His first day on the job in Toledo is scheduled to be March 22, 1999. The Ashtabula Count MR/DD Board appointed Larry Korland, Adult Services Director, to be the interim superintendent, until it finds a replacement for Superintendent Cozza.

Richard Cozza grew up in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, and started his career as a teacher in the MRDD field in Baltimore. Later, he advanced to principal and also worked in Washington, D.C., and Indiana. "I think this is going to be my last move," he said.

Richard described Community Living Options as a private corporation affiliated with the Lucas County Board of MRDD, responsible for residential development and programs and monitoring and quality assurance regarding the MRDD population in Lucas County. He said that contrasted to Ashtabula County, some Ohio counties contract with a private company to provide services to the MRDD population instead of providing them in the public domain.

Reminiscing about conditions in the Ashtabula County when he first started with the MR/DD Board 13 years ago, Richard said that the services the Board offered were then very limited. He predicts that residential development would expand

during the next five to ten years, because aging parents caring for disabled sons and daughters will no longer be able to care for them “like they used to do.”

### **Ash/Craft Recognition Dinner**

August 8, 1999. Ash/Craft Industries Board of Directors hosted a recognition dinner to honor Ash/Craft clients, customers, and employees.

Thirty-one clients who have worked at Ash/Craft for 25 or more years or have achieved successful community employment were honored and 18 employees and customers were recognized for their long-standing support of persons with disabilities through Ash/Craft.



Pictured are Dan Brunell and Larry Moroski, two of the award recipients, and Stephen Long, Ash/Craft Board President. Dan Brunell and Larry Moroski were students in the first class at Happy Hearts School.

### **Larry Korland to Become Superintendent of Ashtabula County MRDD Board**



In a Wednesday, November 3, 1999, story, Jefferson Gazette reporter Craig L. Hofius writes that in the spring of 2000, Larry Korland will no longer be Acting Superintendent of the Ashtabula County Board of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities, but Superintendent of the Board approximately one year after Superintendent Richard Cozza resigned last February.

Ron Tate, president, and spokesman of the MRDD Board said that Larry Korland has been working for the Board over 20 years, and “we thought that the transition from Mr. Cozza would be smoother with somebody who was already in place and well respected. We anticipate in the springtime he will be named superintendent when he presents documentation to the board.”

The Ohio Department of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities requires superintendent certification to serve as a MRDD board superintendent, and while Larry Korland had superintendent certification from the state, he let it

lapse. He needs to update his certification by taking three graduate level courses and he intends to complete them as soon as possible.

Larry Korland has worked for the Ashtabula County MRDD Board since 1976 and besides his duties as Acting Superintendent, he has headed the Ash/Craft Industries Program for several years as he does presently.

### Blue Notes

#### Retarded Children's Council Chartered, 1955

A non-profit corporation charter was granted by Ted Brown, Secretary of State, to the Ashtabula Council for Retarded Children, Inc.

Trustees listed were Ned V. Collander of Ashtabula; Joseph P. Malone of Geneva; and Robert H. McMurry of Conneaut.

The Council for Retarded Children grew from the united efforts of a few parents interested in addressing the cause of their children to establishment of a school in less than a years' time.

September 1956 Harris Memorial Church in Ashtabula offered space for our classes and the school was opened in September with eighteen pupils enrolled. Two teachers were hired and also transportation is being furnished. Two teachers and one assistant employed. Tuition remained at \$6 per week. The council received \$950 dollars from the United Fund.

#### DO YOU KNOW WHAT ASH/CRAFT IS???

Ash/ Craft is the sheltered workshop division of Happy Hearts School.

Ash/ Craft is the adult training program for the mentally retarded of Ashtabula County.

Ash/ Craft can be the solution to your production problems.

Ash/Craft does collating, labeling, salvage, and nuisance work as well as indoor and outdoor maintenance on a sub-contract basis.

Those of you who have work to contract out of your shop,

Ash/Craft is your answer. let Ash/ Craft prove to you that you can benefit by helping Ash/Craft help you. Do not hesitate. Call now. Give Ash/Craft a chance to prove itself!

## Timeline 1990s

1990

One-half mill additional levy passed to address students/clients now on waiting list.

Supported Living Residential Services program begins. First integrated basketball game with local varsity boys basketball team and Happy Hearts Varsity Basketball team. (St. John's High School)

1991

Autistic Preschool Class was established.

Medicaid funds available for specific client services.

State definition of developmental disabilities changes, erecting new eligibility guidelines for changes, erecting new eligibility guidelines for children and adults.

Finance Director position created.

Finance operations computerized.

International Special Olympic games in Minneapolis. Students/clients Jeff Schultz and Amy Turner competed in roller skating and Bob Stewart competed in powerlifting.

National Special Olympic Winter Games in Steamboat Springs, Colorado. Five athletes competed.

1992

Autistic school age classes established.

First Valentine's dance with students crowned king and queen.

First formal school prom was held at Happy Hearts School.

2-mill replacement levy approved.

School districts become responsible for services to 3–5-year-olds.

1993

St. John's satellite established for school aged students.

Approval received for Ash/Craft expansion.

The first strike in the history of the program by A.C.E.M.H. employees union which lasted six days.

1994

The Early Intervention satellite in Andover is established.

Park development is completed and turned over to Ashtabula County 169 Board.

Dick Flower and Stan Gaumer were the driving force behind the completion of the PARK.

The PARK complex total cost was approximately \$160,000 and not one cent of taxpayer money was used.

Residential Department established.

1996

The Conneaut Early Intervention satellite is established.

Early Intervention classrooms now number five.

Happy Hearts adds a Satellite Classroom at Wallace Braden Junior High School.

Five local high school varsity basketball teams have now participated in integrated play with Happy Hearts varsity basketball team.

The Leisure/Recreational Program now has a budget of \$4,000, and students participate in a variety of community activities.

A.R.C. donates \$900 to adaptive physical education teacher for the purchase of a large, adapted bike for handicapped students.

Ash/Craft expansion begins.

Bus fleet numbers 22 buses for eighteen routes. The longest bus route is 220 miles a day. Total bus mileage per day is 1,740 miles.

June 4, 1995. Happy Hearts teacher, Jodi Fowler, founded a program of students from Happy Hearts spending time at Ashtabula Catholic Middle School on West Sixth Street.

40th Anniversary of Happy Hearts School founded by A.R.C.

Present Caseload: School Program, 146; Workshop Program, 241; Community Employment, 10 = 397. Staff people employed by Ashtabula County Board of MR/DD.

Programs general fund is \$6,900,000. The program's total funding is \$8,285,000.

November 26, 1996. Ashtabula County Commissioners appointed a special task force to investigate the Ashtabula County Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities Board program, intent on discovering how the agency racked up a \$700,000 deficit in the past year. The seven-member task force will meet and begin reviewing MR/DD records and interviewing staff.

1997

The Ashtabula County Board of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities passed a budget featuring general fund appropriations totaling \$6.2 million, \$500,000 less than the 1996 budget.

Superintendent Richard Cozza said that the \$500,000 reduction should allow the Board to cover 1997 expenses with existing revenue.

1998

July 1, 1998. Teachers, teacher aides, Ash/Craft Workshop staff, and bus aides approve a three-year tentative contract. Ashtabula County MR/DD Board approves the contract.

1999

February 1999 Superintendent Richard Cozza resigns from the MR/DD Board to take a position in Toledo, Ohio.

November 1999. The Ashtabula County MRDD Board names Acting Superintendent Larry Korland as the new MRDD Superintendent contingent upon updating his state certification

## Special Story: Journey Through Autism, Searching for Hope, or a Small Miracle

A July 30, 1995, series of stories by Ashtabula Star Beacon Life Style Editor, Carl E. Feather explored the challenges, heartbreak, and glimmers of hope in the lives of parents and children with autism and the role Happy Hearts School played in their lives.

Joyce Kren, psychologist at Happy Hearts School, observed: “My gut feeling is that of all the disabilities a child could have, the family who is affected with an autistic child is probably the toughest to deal with. It affects the entire family system. Autism puts the entire family into chaos; it is always a crisis situation. The family of the autistic child has more needs than that of any disabled child.”

.Richard Cozza, Superintendent of the Ashtabula County Board of Mental Retardation/ Developmental Disabilities added that “the mentally retarded child will fit into the routine of the family, but with autism the family fits into the routine of the child.”

Maria and Tony Orland knew only too well what it was to fit their lives into the routines of their child, three-year-old Michael, who was diagnosed with autism in September 1994. The doctors told the Orlandos that their son might not be able to talk or interact with them or other people.

After the diagnosis, the Orlandos embarked on a self-education program, to learn all they could about autism and its many treatment theories. They started and

raised money for a local autistic children's foundation. they take Michael to Cleveland several times weekly for occupational therapy and a speech therapist comes to their house. They have a nutrition consultant to oversee Michael's diet and they are exploring private behavioral therapy services. Tony said, "Every available therapy that is age appropriate I am going to try it."

Maria Orlando is living the truth of Superintendent Cozza's observation that "with autism the family fits into the routine of the child." Maria is the mother and around the clock caretaker of her son, who must ensure that he has a schedule and routine that does not vary. She said that if she veers from it, he gets stressed out and acts out. She has suffered through any screaming and tantrum episodes with her son in stores and restaurants. Michael's "bratty behavior" was one of the many early signs of his autism.

Maria noted that he was not talking very well and when at age two, when someone talked to him he would scream like he wanted them to get away from him. When someone came to visit, Michael would shake their hand and then expect them to leave. While still a baby, he would not make eye contact with people and when someone made silly faces at him he would scowl instead of laugh. And most heartbreaking to his parents, he did not talk to them.

In October 1994, the Orlandos enrolled Michael in Happy Hearts School and they were very pleased with the school and its teachers. They felt that Michael progressed in his socialization skills and the Happy Hearts staff helped them deal with Michael's behavior. "Learning the fact that he needs to be on a schedule and have a routine has really helped his behavior," his mother Maria said.

Tony Orlando said Michael's diagnosis has dramatically changed their lives. Friends who once visited with their children stay away because they do not know how to deal with an autistic child. Others, including family members have grown closer to Michael as they learn the nuances of his autistic behavior. "An autistic child is like any other handicapped child. They just want to be loved. That is all these kids ask for, they just want to know you care about them," he said.

Fifteen years later in an Ashtabula Star Beacon story dated April 9, 2010, Staff Writer Karl E. Pearson wrote another story about Michael Orlando titled "Michael Orlando: Putting his best foot forward."



*Michael Orlando works on baton exchanges with the Edgewood track team. Ashtabula Star Beacon photo by Warren Dillaway*

Members of the Edgewood High School track team in Ashtabula and senior teammate Michael Orlando, a sprinter for coach Jim Sanchez's squad, are a true teamwork team. In his second season with the `Edgewood Warriors Michael has made strides to equal his sprinting `prowess in living and advancing through his autism and his teammates have learned to appreciate everyday "normal" actions as gifts and not to take quite as much in their lives for granted.

Both Michael and his teammates have experienced the growing opportunities in teammate interaction, developing levels of self-confidence and the benefits of teaching moments.

"It's definitely been an educational experience for us," Coach Sanchez said. "We always try and emphasize family around our program, and I definitely think Michael has not only become a part of our family, but we have all learned new lessons in what family means. We talk a lot about legacy, and not only making a better athlete but a better person. At first, we had to get used to Michael and he had to get used to us. I am so proud of our team and how they have really rallied behind him. It has been a great experience for all of us. We learned a lot from him and he is learned a lot from us." It took some time for Michael to get used to performing the work of a sprinter, but now he enjoys it. "When I first started out, it was hard work, but it's not anymore," he said.

Michael also has a unique perspective on running the sprints. He says that when he gets out of the blocks he feels like he is running through a wind tunnel.

"Sometimes, I imagine I'm moving along and no one else can see me." He has also enjoyed the satisfaction of a sprinter when he does it right, maybe even more than the typical competitor. He knows what he has to do to get it right, something that he quickly understood and doing it right makes him feel pumped up and have a lot of confidence in himself.

Although crediting Coach Sanchez with helping him out the most, Michael also gives teammates and fellow seniors James Armeni and Tyler Wright with helping him reach for more goals. As he has gained more self-confidence, Michael has taken on other roles with the team, ones that would not necessarily be expected because of his autism. "I try and tell the freshmen how to do things the right way,



things like opposite arm, opposite leg,” he said. “I enjoy teaching the other kids.”

In some ways, Michael has taken on the role of an assistant coach. He takes pride in helping his teammates meet the academic standards to stay eligible for the team. Coach Sanchez said that every team member has to fill out grade cards every week for the coaches to check and Michael always reminds them to do their grade cards.

This year, in addition to enjoying Coach Sanchez’s social studies classes, Michael has developed a new academic passion. He likes looking at maps in his geography class which Assistant Coach Ed Dick teaches. Coach Sanchez says proudly, “The teacher asked which lake is the largest lake in the world, and Michael told them the right answer, the Caspian Sea in Russia.”

According to Coach Sanchez, Michael likes to take pictures at the track meets, commenting that “it’s like something you can keep forever.” “I took a picture of the sunset of our meet at PV with my cell phone camera,” Michael said. He might be able to turn his love of photography into a livelihood. “I’d like to take photography classes,” he said. “I’d like to do it somewhere around here.”

His track experiences have taught Michael some long-term truths, too, and he wishes he could have done track for four years. “The model I want to live by is doing everything like it’s my last time,” he said. “When you get to college, you don’t want to look back and say you wish you could do it over again.”

Maria Orlando wishes Michael had started track as a freshman as well, but no matter how long his track career turns out to be, Coach Sanchez is positive about one thing,” Michael’s a part of our track family,” he said emphatically. “He always will be.”

## Blue Notes

February 1999 Superintendent Richard Cozza resigns from the MR/DD Board to take a position in Toledo, Ohio.

## Chapter Six: Trail Blazing into the Twenty First Century-2000-2010

### **New Directions Winter 2000 Turning in New Directions by Larry J. Korland, Superintendent**

As we begin the year 2000, this is a good time to reflect on our program and review our direction and path for the future. Almost fifty years ago, programs like Happy Hearts School were springing up throughout Ohio, started by parents who



were determined to provide their sons and daughters an education program that would enrich their lives.

It was these pioneering families who struggled to raise the funds, run the programs, and advocate for their children. They taught the rest of us that people with disabilities should be a part of and included in the communities, in our schools, and on the job.

Because of their efforts and dedication, and the ongoing support of our community, people with mental retardation and other developmental disabilities have had the benefit of programs and training offered through Happy Hearts School and Ash/Craft Industries.

Although great strides have been made over these past years, there is still much for us to do, and challenges for us to face. As an organization we must continue to be sensitive and responsive to the needs of the people we are serving. The children and adults enrolled in our programs along with their families should be the people shaping the future of Happy Hearts, Ash/Craft. and the Ashtabula County Board of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities. Our role should be to maximize the available resources for our program and then

use those funds wisely. We must continue to offer meaningful choices and options for the people we serve. Services to infants through our Early Intervention program is critically important to assure those children and their families receive the training and treatment necessary to maximize their development.

Our school age program and sheltered workshop will continue to be a central part of the Ashtabula County Board of Mental Retardation and Developmental disabilities; however, other educational and vocational options must also be available, including expanding our cooperative educational programs with local school districts, along with more supported employment training programs leading to jobs in the community. Perhaps our newest program area, Residential Services, is one that will certainly need to grow over the next several years. With an ever-increasing number of older adults with disabilities who are or will be in need of safe and affordable housing, we must develop the residential options desired by them and their families and provide the support necessary to assure their health and well-being.

By working together to provide vital and meaningful programs responsive to the needs of our people and their families, the future is bright and the potential for our people is limitless.

### **A School Day with Kevin Kolman at Happy Hearts March 19, 2000**



*Kevin Kolman, 7, swings in the fishnet as he protects his favorite Dr. Seuss book. March 19,2000.*

In every Happy Hearts classroom there is a teacher and at least one assistant. Happy Hearts teachers like first year teacher Melissa Hunter understand the importance of structure and routine in a positive learning atmosphere for mentally retarded students, some who will not be able to be integrated into a regular school system.

A typical Wednesday in Melissa Hunter's class starts with breakfast at 9

a.m., followed by learning time, story time and lunch at 11:30. In the afternoon, there is a group activity, arts, and crafts, writing and free time. The daily schedule stays the same except at 10 a.m., 12:15 p.m. and 1 p.m., and the students know when and where to go throughout the day. “They love their structure and there are no surprises,” Melissa Hunter said.

The eight students in her class range in age from 7 to 13, and she classifies her class as “intermediate.” This is Melissa Hunter’s first year teaching special needs students. For six years she worked in the Canton public school system with normal children, but there were special needs students in her room and she took a special interest in them. She symbolizes the dedication, patience, and pride of Happy Hearts teachers. She said that her students’ accomplishments stem from self-satisfaction with what they are doing. “We work really hard promoting independence here,” teacher Melissa said.

Happy Hearts students function at different levels and they learn different skills in different educational time frames. Some are not able to study academic subjects while others can. Some have to learn physical control and some need therapy. Happy Hearts works with children with mental, emotional, and physical handicaps, according to Director of Education Anne Zeitler. “We do not necessarily classify them by their disabilities. It is how they function.”

Four satellite locations are located in Ashtabula County apart from the main school in Kingsville. There is an early intervention site in Andover for children two and younger. A site is located at Austinburg Elementary in the Geneva Area City School District, another at Wallace H. Braden Junior High School in the Buckeye Local School District, and two locations at St. John and St. Paul Catholic School.

### **Ashtabula County Board of Mental Retardation/ Developmental Disabilities Approves Preschool Program August 29, 2000**

Advancing education is just as important to the Ashtabula County Board of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities as it is to any other school district. The Board took steps for its students during its regular meeting Thursday evening. First, the Board approved a preschool program that will include both Happy Hearts students and other children. Information about the program was provided by Superintendent Larry Korland and Anne Zeitler, director of educational Services at Happy Hearts.

The students will attend school in Happy Hearts classrooms. Enrollment has been on a first- come, first-serve basis. There probably will be two units, Superintendent Korland and Director Zeitler said. Six staff members are needed to run a unit. The all-day program will run four days a week at a \$50 fee. Parents are responsible for the transportation of students who are not part of Happy Hearts, Director Zeitler and Superintendent Korland said the school year will run in conjunction with the Happy Hearts calendar.

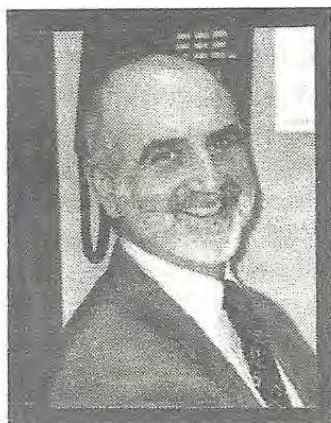
In other business, the Board renewed Happy Hearts satellite unit agreements with Geneva Area City Schools and St. John and Paul Catholic High School as originally approved July 22, 1999.

September 23, 2000

### **People Power**

**by Larry J. Korland, Superintendent**

On October 3, 2000, about a thousand people from across Ohio gathered on the west lawn of the state house in Columbus to let the Governor know that the time is now to provide additional state funding to provide and develop residential services for people with developmental disabilities.



People gathered to tell their stories of how long they have waited to receive needed residential supports and assistance. People with developmental disabilities along with family members told of waiting ten years or more for help and some were still waiting. The funding has simply not been available to provide the residential housing that is needed.

The residential needs for people with developmental disabilities are only going to increase as our population gets older. In Ohio today, there are over 20,000 people with mental retardation and developmental disabilities who are over the age of eighteen living at home; of that number, 3,000 of these people are over the age of forty, living with and relying on an elderly parent for their care.

Unlike most families whose children eventually move out of the home, these families have cared for their sons and daughters 40 to 50 years without asking for

any assistance from the state. This was a choice and decision that these families made many years ago to care for their sons and daughters at home and they have quietly done so without asking for help and without complaint. The question now is who will care for their sons and daughters when they are no longer able to do so? Where will their children live? Who will look after them and will their health and safety be assured? These are the questions our parents are asking, and that now is the time for the Governor and the State of Ohio to step forward with the funding necessary.

Over the past ten years the entire state budget has increased by nearly 70 percent. While the department budgets of other state social service and education agencies have kept pace with or exceeded the 70 percent growth of the state budget during these ten years, the budget for the Department of Mental Retardation has increased only 31.5 percent less than half the growth of the state. The state funding during this period of time has simply not been adequate to meet the needs of people with mental retardation and developmental disabilities, and because of that we are now faced with a statewide residential crisis.

This problem of providing appropriate and adequate residential options for people with developmental disabilities is too large to be solved individually at the local level. To find a fair and reasonable solution it will take a concerted statewide effort of our families working with and talking to their local legislatures, the Governor, and the various state agencies and organizations representing people with developmental disabilities. Our families want to know that their sons and daughters will have a safe and secure place to live when they can no longer care for them. It is not an unreasonable request. The time is now for everyone to come together to find the solution and give our families some measure of peace of mind.

### **Ash/Craft Employees Work in the Ashtabula Community**

In an Ashtabula Star Beacon article dated October 10,2000, Lynda Perry, Ash/Craft Supported Employment Coordinator, listed the Ash/Craft employees that are working in the Ashtabula community. Titled *Supported Employment Partnerships*, Lynda lists each client and where they are employed. Dick West, Brian Flaugher, and Jim Flower built fence panels at Thomas Fence. Mary Soule kept the chalk boards clean at Grand River Academy. Gabrielle Sumner kept the floors sparkling at A. Louis Supply. Frances Hollaman cleaned tables at Park Haven Nursing Home. Robert Stewart prepared sandwiches at Subway Sandwich Shoppe. Theresa Spang operated the dishwasher at Happy Hearts School.

Dan Hunt kept things neat and clean at the Mall Food Court.  
Tony Butler loaded the dishwasher at Geneva McDonalds.  
Mike Emory put away the dishes at Bob Evans.

Robert Stewart has been employed by the Subway Sandwich Shoppe since 1995. Mrs. Mae Stewart, his mother, is thrilled with the maturity and independence her son has developed since obtaining this job and she says that Robert's job has brought him to levels she never thought he would be able to attain. Robert's success has been matched by many others over the past several years.

Ash/Craft's supported Employment Department has provided assistance to nearly one hundred adults with developmental disabilities through programs designed to meet individual needs. These programs provide the opportunity for enrolled adults to learn about local jobs that are available and enable them to make informed choices. They receive assistance in obtaining jobs and then are provided with job coaching services, helping them to learn the tasks and to adjust to the emotional and physical demands that a new job presents.

Over forty companies throughout the county have participated in the programs, many gaining valuable employees in the process. They have been able to tap into a resource that has provided trained, dependable employees who have a support system in place that is not only an asset to the employee, but to the business enterprise as well. The Thomas Family owners of "Best of County" award winning Thomas Fence, believes that their partnership with the Supported Employment Department at Ash/Craft Industries was one of the best decisions that their company has made. Ash/Craft Industries clients have been building fences at Thomas Fence since 1993.

In addition to adults with developmental disabilities, the Supported Employment Department is assisting students at Happy Hearts School in making a smooth transition from school to work. By providing work experiences in conjunction with a classroom component, students are gaining job and employability skills. Students are encouraged to determine their preferences and to make adjustments in their life goals based on their experiences.

### **Teachers Express Concerns Over Proposed Changes November 18, 2000**

Proposed changes at Ash/Craft Industries and Happy Hearts School drew comments from teachers at Thursday's meeting of Ashtabula County Board of

Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities. Potential changes were announced in October by Superintendent Larry Korland who reported on the findings of the MR/DD management team.

Teacher Alice Cook said she is more concerned about what was not included in those changes than what was included. Cook mentioned three specific areas of concern. She said there is a need for more assistive technology communication, and devices and functional computers for Happy Hearts students who are non-verbal.

Advances in technology have made the devices presently used virtually obsolete, she said. "It's very important that we begin using the technology that is available," Alice said, adding computers in the classroom are discards, which teachers often have to get up and running on their own.

Alice Cook's second concern is lack of cable television access, which makes books the school has received from station WVIZ unusable.

Third, the fact that three satellite sites for special education programs are not wheelchair accessible is a problem in her eyes because it prevents a significant number of Happy Hearts students from benefiting from those programs, she said.

Fellow teacher Meg Haligren said communication devices presently in use not only are in short supply, but do not adequately allow non-verbal students to express their wants and needs.

All input from Thursday, as well as information garnered from questionnaires recently distributed will be reviewed at a board work session set for 6:30 p.m. November 30th.

Shirley Howland, teacher, and member of Ashtabula County Employees Association for the Mentally Handicapped, said the association is compiling a list of its concerns to present to Superintendent Korland prior to the work session. The recent management team report will also be reviewed November 30th said Board President Ron Tate.

Mechanic Mike Kushma urged the Board to consider the needs of the MR/DD transportation fleet when discussing funding issues. A majority of the twenty-two buses in the fleet have more than 100,000 miles on them. Several others range from 150,000 to 250,000 and one has 300,000 Mike said. Ten buses are more than



ten years old and four are more than 16 years old. “It’s becoming a struggle to keep the older ones up and safe,” Mike Kushma said.

## **MR/DD Board Reviews Budget**

December 3, 2000

Members of Ashtabula County Board of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities held a work session Thursday to discuss the 2001 budget. There are few changes from last year, according to Treasurer Lori Burdick. One difference is a \$120,000 Prevention, Retention, and Contingency state grant through the Department of Job and Family Services. “The grant has allowed us to considerably expand our services to children and families of early intervention,” Superintendent Larry Korland said.

Among the budget items reviewed Thursday were salaries, material, and supplies, equipment, contract repairs, travel expenses, workers’ compensation insurance and employee health insurance. Salaries in 2001 will account for more than half of the nearly \$8 million general revenue fund, coming in at \$4.8 million, Treasurer Burdick said. Workers’ compensation insurance is based on 4 percent of the total payroll or \$181,000.

Good news for the board this year came with an announcement that health insurance premiums will not increase in 2001. These premiums typically increase by about 14 per cent each year Superintendent Korland said. However, the MR/DD board’s participation in a trust made up of other boards across the state enables it to keep premiums the same. The trust, formed about 12 years ago, now has its own staff to administer claims, he said. “By reducing fixed costs and eliminating the third-party administrator we were able to realize no increase in premiums, at least for this year,” Superintendent Korland said.

The financial picture entering 2003, however, does not look as rosy. Treasurer Burdick projects a carryover of \$800,000 going into that year compared to \$2.8 million in 2001 and about \$1.5 million in 2002. The reason for the steadily dwindling carryover is projected increases in insurance premiums as well as in salaries, per contractual agreements with employees,” Superintendent Korland said.

**2001**

## **Happy Hearts Outreach Helps Disabled Children in All Locations**

March 5, 2001

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) guarantees every disabled child the right to education in public school. Every school district in the county provides a special education program, Anne Zeitler, director of educational services for the Ashtabula County Board of Mental Retardation and Developmentally Disabilities said.

But some parents of children with higher needs want their child in a separate facility, Brett Horovath, administrative assistant for Geneva Area City Schools, said.

Happy Hearts School in Kingsville provides school-age educational services for individuals ages 6 to 22, Zeitler said. There are eighty-three school age pupils. The school also offers pre-school classes for sixteen pupils with disabilities and an early intervention program for fifty-five toddlers and infants, either disabled or typically developing.

“We generally deal with children with more severe disabilities,” Zeitler said “All our classrooms are considered multi handicapped. We have a teacher and a teacher’s aide, with eight children in each classroom. The school also provides therapy services- physical, occupational, speech and language- adaptive physical education and a full-time nurse. The parents and the Individual Education Plan (IEP) team feel the students can learn best here,” she said. The IEP team can be made up of social workers medical personnel, case managers, parents, or guardians – people who are concerned with a disabled person’s health and welfare. “Parents are an active part of the IEP team. At the beginning of the school year we have IEP development days working directly with the parents and their needs,” she said.

And not all the students who are enrolled in Happy Hearts attend school there, Educational Services Director Zeitler said. “In early intervention, we have a satellite location in Andover. For our school-age pupils, we have three other satellite locations – Austinburg Elementary, a junior high classroom at Braden and two classrooms for high school age at SS John and Paul,” she explained.

Pupils enrolled at the Braden and SS John and Paul satellites come from

throughout the county. They are with their peers. At Austinburg the students come from the district. The Austinburg satellite is what we are working for – to provide services for students who live in the district” Zeitler said. “The students attend there by choice if the parents choose. We are assisting them to provide the services,” Director Zeitler said.

## **Cookies for Students**

*Happy Hearts cooks Marge Wood (left) and Lorraine Bean (right) made gingerbread cookies for students, including from left Joey Burt, Mason Lija, Ali Kister, and Laura Grasser. December 22, 2001. Star Beacon photo by Warren Dillaway.*



## **Special Olympian Jim Flower Will Run with the Olympic Torch December 31, 2001**

Special Olympian Jim Flower will be one of at least three Ashtabula County residents who will run with or carry the Olympic torch through the streets of Erie, Pennsylvania. Jim Flower, a long-time Special Olympian, has been told to arrive at 9:30 a.m. at Hallman Chevrolet for the staging operation. He said he is excited about running in the event after participating in the Special Olympics since 1986.

He has been training with his father, Richard, at the Ashtabula YMCA. Jim’s brother who lives in St. Louis nominated him to carry the torch. His parents, Richard, and Grace have followed him through his athletic career that has included swimming, softball, and cross-country skiing. After instructions and interviews the runners will be sent to their specific relay segment to receive the torch. 2002.



*Claude Gaumer packs jewelry boxes at Ash/Craft Industries in March 2002. Ashtabula Star Beacon photo is by Bill West.*

An Ashtabula Star Beacon story dated Monday March 18, 2002, narrated some of the history of Happy Hearts School and Ash/Craft Industries and explored part of the contemporary Ash/Craft story.

In 2002, approximately 250 developmentally disabled adults worked from 9 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. five days a week making parts for jewelry boxes, fluorescent lights, and cardboard partitions. They tended plants in the greenhouse and sold them to customers from all over Ashtabula County.

Superintendent Larry Korland said, “All our students and adults are much more like everyone else than different. We see our people with skills and abilities before disabilities. These are individuals that can contribute to the community a variety of ways.”

The story stated that Happy Hearts School served 140 children at the Kingsville main campus as well as in satellite classrooms in Andover, Braden Junior High, St. John, and Paul, Austinburg Elementary and Geneva Junior High Schools.



“There are 15 teachers and teacher’s assistants, all of whom are outgoing, creative, and love children with special needs,” said Anne Zeitler, Director of Educational Services.

*Rodney Cottrel listens to substitute teacher Carolyn DiLimme read a book during class at Happy Hearts School, March 18, 2002.*

### **Larry Korland plans to retire as MR/DD Superintendent**

June 7, 2002

Saying it is the right time, Larry Korland announced Thursday night he will retire as superintendent of the Ashtabula County Board of Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities. He will be replaced by Anne Zeitler, the board’s Director of Educational Services, effective August 1 .

“I’ve been working in the field for over 30 years, starting in Geauga County and coming in here in 1976,” Larry Korland said in a phone interview. “I just thought this was the right time to be with my family and do some traveling.”

He said he and his wife Cassie have family spread across the country, but they have not yet chosen an itinerary.

The Board's superintendent for the past three years, Larry Korland, said he will miss the people with whom he has worked. "I will certainly miss the opportunities to be with the people we serve, both the kids and the adults," he said.

"They have probably taught me more than anyone else about what's important in life."

Despite his retirement, Korland said he will continue to be in contact and support MR/DD programs, including Happy Hearts School, and Ash/Craft Industries which serve almost three hundred children and adults.

### **Anne Zeitler Becomes Superintendent of Ashtabula County Board of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities**

August 16, 2002

Anne Zeitler has taken over the helm as superintendent of the Ashtabula County Board of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities. She replaces Larry Korland, who retired August 1 after three years as superintendent and more than 30 years of service in the field.

"It has only been one ½ weeks, but I have been organizing and making contacts. I am also buy working on our annual plan and organizing the leadership team," she said.

Former director of educational services, Anne Zeitler, now oversees Happy Hearts School, and Ash/Craft Industries as well as four satellite schools in Andover, Austinburg, Geneva and Ashtabula. She has been with MR/DD for 24 years, working in all aspects of the program.



ANNE ZEITLER

A graduate of Bowling Green University, Anne received her master's degree from Cleveland State University. She is also a graduate of LEADERship Ashtabula County and has earned 64 hours beyond her master's degree at Youngstown State University, Kent State University, and Lake Erie College. She makes her home in Ashtabula Township.

Happy Hearts Music teacher Michael DeMarino took over Anne's old job as Director of Educational Services on August 1st. School begins for students on August 27th.

The school and sheltered industry serve nearly three hundred children and adults with mental retardation, autism, and other developmental disabilities in Ashtabula

County. Part of the mission of the program is to make sure that independence, growth, challenge, and pride remain important factors in their client's lives outside of school and work, Zeitler said.

### **Superintendent Zeitler Has a Quiet First Day**

August 28, 2002

It was a pretty quiet day at Happy Hearts School, Superintendent Anne Zeitler said. Freshly waxed floors, newly painted walls, and a big pot of colorful petunias greeted 140 children. "We're off to a good week," Anne said. "Everyone arrived safely."

Tuesday was Superintendent Zeitler's first day of school since taking the job as top administrator. She visited classrooms, talked with teachers and of course, had meetings to attend. She replaced Larry Korland who retired August 1 after three years on the job and 30 years of service in the field. Superintendent Zeitler is looking forward to a good year.

2003

### **Looking at Levies**

January 25, 2003

The Ashtabula County Board of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities voted Thursday to put a new operating levy on the May ballot. The levy will generate about \$2.1 million dollars a year for seven years for the purpose of paying operating expenses, according to Lori Burdick, the district's finance director. The levy will be 1.33 mills and will be the first new levy on the ballot since November 1990.

### **MR/DD Board Will Ask for Operating Levy**

February 19, 2003

Projecting a \$1.2 million deficit by 2008, the Ashtabula County Board of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities will ask voters to approve a new seven-year operating levy in May.

In the past few years, MR/DD has been squeezed by funding declines from state and federal sources and a legislative mandate to expand its staffing, Finance Director Lori Burdick and board President Ron Tate told the county commissioners Tuesday. "Everything pretty much flat-lined for us so the levy money is pretty

much the only new thing we can tap into,” Finance Director Burdick said. Presented with that scenario, County Commissioners Robert J. Boggs and Joe Moroski passed a resolution to submit a new 1.33 levy to voters, with Deborah A. Newcomb absent because of a family emergency. If ratified, the levy is expected to generate \$2.1 million for MR/DD.

About 70 percent of the Board’s funding already arrives through three levies that total 3.83 mills, Board President Tate said. The remainder of its approximately \$9 million budget is fueled by state and federal funding.

Commissioner Boggs said MR/DD’s situation was not a surprise because the commissioners had conducted a budget hearing with the board at the end of last year.

By 2008, MR/DD estimates employee insurance costs will more than triple the 2002 rate of \$1.28 million to reach \$4.25 million. Besides a nationwide increase in insurance figures, MR/DD also will be covering more employees because recent legislation required the board to add several positions, including an investigative services department, a business manager, and a Medicaid services manager. Overall, the board has been forced to double its service support department, President Tate said. Board estimates for 2008 reflect a 42 percent increase in salaries from the 2002 numbers.

In turn, the state has reduced its funding through the Ohio Department of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities for 2003. Further complicating matters, Governor Bob Taft has threatened to chop 2.5 percent from the budget of the Ohio Department of Education if the General Assembly fails to deliver a balanced budget to his desk by Thursday.

“Unfortunately, you don’t find out until the letter hits the mail instead of your check,” Lori Burdick said about notification of several previous state cutbacks. MR/DD programs, which include Happy Hearts School and Ash/Craft Industries serve about five hundred children and adults.

### **MR/DD Board Meets and Finances a Heavy Lifter**

The Ashtabula County Board of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities finalized a purchase agreement for a hydraulic vehicle lift with Safetylane Equipment Corporation at its meeting. The company will provide and install the bus garage lift at Ash/Craft Industries at a cost of \$29,746. The lift will be delivered early this week and installation will begin soon. The new lift will be

able to hold buses weighting up to 35,000 pounds. It will be used to lift buses, delivery trucks and community employment vehicles for repairs. The district does not foresee any additional costs beyond the agreement of \$29,746, said Mike Kushma, the senior mechanic at Ash/Craft Industries.

Addressing other business, the Board formed a Levy Committee that will meet every Wednesday at the Special Olympics Pavilion between Ash/Craft Industries and Happy Hearts School. The Board voted at its January meeting to place a 1.33 mill operating levy on the May ballot. The levy will generate about \$2.1 million a year for seven years. Superintendent Anne Zeitler announced that a February 17 in-service taught teachers about positive behavior supports and recognizing child abuse. She also announced that March is MR/DD Awareness month.

### **MR/DD Board Will Recognize Staff at December Dinner**

November 27, 2003

Ashtabula County's Board of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities announced Wednesday that its staff recognition dinner will be held December 10th at the Ashtabula Country Club. The Board oversees Happy Hearts School, which serves 150 developmentally disabled children, and Ash/Craft Industries, where about 275 disabled adults work five days a week.

In the meantime, the Board is busy working on its annual plan for 2004, Superintendent Anne Zeitler said. A second meeting to gather the community's thoughts was held Monday afternoon, with about a dozen people attending. "We're hoping people will continue to share their thoughts with us," she said.

The Board also:

Renewed an agreement with the Ohio School Council and the Illuminating Company.

Prepared for spring vocational certification for employment services from the \ Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities.

Received the news that MR/DD's preschool program was in compliance with the Ohio Department of Education.

Thanked the levy committee for its hard work in helping pass the 1.33 mill seven-year operating levy on the November 4th ballot.



Students Participate in a Gym-a-thon for Jim  
October 14, 2004



*October 14, 2004. Bailey Beres participates in the Gym-a-Thon at Happy Hearts School to raise money for Olympian Jim Flower's trip to Japan. Ashtabula Star Beacon photo by Bill West.*

By Traci Shuman

Students at Happy Hearts School walked, ran, strolled, and skated around the gym Wednesday to help send their friend Jim Flower to Japan for the Special Olympics this winter.

Jim, 24, is one of just a handful of Special Olympics Ohio participants chosen to go to Nagano, Japan for the World Special Olympics. Jim will represent the United States in cross country skiing from February 26 to March 5.

"We're just so proud of him," Tracey Cory, teacher assistant at Happy Hearts said. "I'm sure he'll represent the U. S. well."

During the Gym-a-Thon for Jim, preschool and school age children at Happy Hearts donated time and energy, as parents and community members made monetary donations to support him. Cory and Rose McKeithlan, nurse's assistant, organized the event to help raise money for Jim's trip, for which he must raise a total of \$3,000. Until the snow starts flying, Jim will spend his free time preparing for the event in Japan by working on strength and endurance. Jim actively participates in other sports, including softball and bowling. He has thus far earned 138 medals and 118 ribbons for various athletic competitions.

Jim also trains at the YMCA three days a week for 45 minutes before he starts his workday at Ash/Craft Industries. Friends at Happy Hearts are anxious to tip their hats and bid Jim a fond farewell when he leaves for Japan in February. We couldn't be more proud," Rose McKeithlan, nurse's assistant at Happy Hearts said.

2005

## **Fifty Years of Happy Hearts School and Ash/Craft Industries**

January 30, 2005

Happy Hearts School alumni who now work at Ash/Craft Industries are (standing from left) Dan Custead, Claude Gaumer (seated from left) Rena Hudson and Diane Dickson.



Students (from left) Nathaniel Emerick, Nicole Madden, and Michael Spaulding attend a class.

### **Opening Doors for 50 Years**

January 30, 2005

During its past 50 years of existence, Happy Hearts School has overcome many challenges and to celebrate its 50th Anniversary, the School and the Ashtabula County Board of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities are throwing a six-month party.

“Opening Doors for 50 Years,” will be the theme for the anniversary celebration that will begin in March and continue through September. Several committees have been formed and plans are in progress to commemorate the start of Happy Hearts School.

Parent, Board member, and more solid than a brick foundation supporter Inez Gaumer recalled Happy Hearts started with an ad in the Ashtabula Star Beacon asking if any families were interested in starting a school for the mentally retarded. Five families met who were bound together by the common goal of seeking to find a way for their children to learn and develop despite the dismal prognosis from their family doctors.

The doctors gave Inez and her husband Stanley that dismal prognosis when they advised them to put their son, Claude, in an institution and forget about him. The same doctors also told the Gaumers that Claude, who has Downs Syndrome, would never walk, talk, or function well.

Gene Moroski, of Ashtabula and his ex-wife Nadine had a similar experience. Their doctors gave them two choices about the future of their son Larry, who also was born with Downs Syndrome. The choices were putting him in a state institution or keeping him at home, “meaning keep him inside the house where no one would see him,” Gene recalled.

The Moroskis were one of the original five families who formed the Ashtabula County Council for Retarded Citizens. These parents worked hard together and with the community to open the doors of Happy Hearts School in March 1955. It was located in the basement of Elm Avenue Methodist Church in Ashtabula with seven students and one teacher. The Council chose the name “Happy Hearts” to convey the message of hope that the school gave to the parents of special needs children and to reflect the generosity of Ashtabula Countians toward any person with a disability.

The council continued to oversee Happy Hearts School and, in 1959, voters in Ashtabula County passed an operating levy that opened a new door of many years of support from the community. The 50 Anniversary celebration includes the people of this county. Without them and their support we would not be here,” Gene Moroski said.

In the early 1960s, the Council was able to add a sheltered workshop, preschool, and home visitor programs as well as an addition of several classrooms. During this time, Claude Gaumer began his education at Happy Hearts. “His Happy Hearts Education has helped him tremendously in his development. We’ve always had such a dedicated staff who really cares about their students and clients,” his mother said.

As student enrollment increased, so did the need for space and Happy Hearts opened its doors in various locations, including the Austinburg Grade School building where Dorothy Bishop of Ashtabula began a 22-year teaching career with Happy Hearts. “I worked with the teenagers teaching them home skills. I loved them all and really enjoyed working with them,” she said In 1966, the voters of Ashtabula County approved a bond issue for the construction of a new school

building. The Kingsville Township location of Happy Hearts and Ash/Craft permanently opened its doors in 1968.” We have progressed from the basements of churches and the old Children’s Home to this beautiful building that is beautifully maintained” Gene Moroski said.

Since that time, Happy Hearts and Ash/Craft have far surpassed the dreams of those few parents who met in 1954. Now under the direction of Ashtabula County Board of Mentally Retarded and Developmentally Disabled, Happy Hearts and Ash/Craft serve more than 570 people throughout Ashtabula County in a variety of ways. The benefits to mentally retarded and developmentally disabled children and their parents include bus transportation, hot breakfasts, and lunch, physical, speech and occupational therapies, adaptive physical education, academic learning, and self-care skills, a full-time nurse, Early Intervention, five satellite locations, support services and many others.

The first students at Happy Hearts, now adults, have graduated into Ash/Craft Industries which is a way for them to continue to learn and truly be productive. “Larry gets a paycheck every two weeks. He loves cashing that check, and he is so proud of it,” Gene Moroski said.

Claude Gaumer who is now 49, not only walks, talks, and loves his work at Ash/Craft, he participates in Special Olympics where he plays softball, runs track, bowls every Saturday and he is an excellent swimmer. “The program gives back to the community, the clients spend their paychecks here and there is a real production of goods being made and grown,” Inez Gaumer said.

The 50th Anniversary Celebration Committee has many things planned, including two open houses, a professionally made historical video and a booth with a story board to be at the Ashtabula Home and Garden Show at Ashtabula Mall in March. “The community really needs to attend the open houses and see the progress of how this program has grown because of the support of the community,” Gene Moroski said.

### **MR/DD Board Could Face Budget Cuts**

March 16, 2005

The Ashtabula County Board of Mental Retardation Developmental Disabilities could face a budget cut of nearly \$1 million by the end of June.

According to MR/DD Board Superintendent Anne Zeitler, after receiving funds under the Community Alternative Funding System for about 15 years, the Board

expects to lose these funds by June 30 of this year. She said that although the loss of funds puts extra pressure on the Board, the Board is operating on a day-to-day basis since the information changes regularly and it plans to address the new challenges creatively.

“The board will be proactive and prepare for this loss of funding” Superintendent Zeitler said. “It is out of our control; we just have to be pro-active. We may need to make some changes. When you are preparing for a \$1 million loss of funding, changes are to be expected.”

Superintendent Zeitler stated that the Board would do its best to make sure the changes have minimal impacts on the employees and the community. She said that for the present, Board Members were discussing best and worst-case scenarios, but it has not made any decisions about actions it would take. “No matter what the result, the Board will function as usual. We have goals set for ourselves and we’re not going to let this interfere,” she said.

### **Nadine Recalls**

Ashtabula County Fair, August 7, 2005

Nadine Moroski of Kingsville recalled working bake sale booths 50 years ago at the fair to help Happy Hearts School. “Our first year we made candy and handed out literature,” she said. “It helped so much and people were so good about helping us.”

Every year when she started making candy her son Larry, who goes to Ash/Craft Workshop, would excitedly ask, “Where are we going? To the fair?”

### **Happy Hearts Marks 50 Years**

September 2005

Happy Hearts School is celebrating 50 years of operation and to celebrate there will be an open house held. The Ashtabula County Board of mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities is sponsoring an open house “Opening Doors for 50 Years,” that will be held September 29 from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. and 6:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. at the school, 2505 S. Ridge East and Ash Craft Industries, 5959 Green Road, Kingsville. The day will feature tours of both facilities and a video depicting the history of Happy Hearts and Ash Craft Industries. Parents who came together

in 1955 to create Happy Hearts School also will be available to discuss 50 years of memories.

Refreshments will be served throughout the event. The community is invited to attend and to share with staff and students the story of Happy Hearts.

September 29, 2005

A large inflatable birthday cake greeted visitors to Happy Hearts School, Thursday. The school held an open house in the afternoon and evening. The open house allowed former students and parents a chance to come back and visit, said Happy Hearts Principal Ken Schmiesing. Some of the students were excited because they saw some of their former students, Schmiesing said. It was a nice turnout. The event was also open to the public. Ash/Craft industries also celebrated with an open house

2006

### **Protecting Mentally Retarded and Developmentally Disabled People from Abusers**

April 5, 2006

Anne Zeitler, Ashtabula County Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities Board Superintendent says that although getting an abuser listed on the Ohio Department of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities is a slow process, the registry is the most effective available tool to protect mentally challenged people from known abusers.

Created to keep abusive employees from working in the system, the registry requires the State of Ohio to review each report of abuse, neglect, or misappropriation to determine whether the report has a reasonable basis. The county MR/DD Boards initiate the investigations and notify the state. If the accusation is criminal, law enforcement officials are notified. Investigations sometimes have criminal and legal implications, taking a case out of the hands of the MR/DD board and adding years to the process. If allegations are substantiated, the state director places the employee's name on the registry.

Time and locality often limit the effectiveness of the registry. It often takes years for an allegation of abuse to make its way through the system and an abuser being listed on the registry. The registry is also limited to the State of Ohio, as many states do not sponsor a registry and no national registry exists. The only thing

stopping a known Ohio abuser from crossing state lines for employment are employers willing to search online registries in each state.

"Even background checks won't catch a lot of the criteria for abuse of the mentally challenged. That is why this database is so very valuable to us. It is the first line of defense in catching abuse," Superintendent Zeitler said.

According to Superintendent Zeitler, though it is the most effective and often only paper trail of abuse and misconduct in the industry, there are holes in the abuse registry system that could potentially allow an abuser to work with the developmentally challenged for years after an allegation of abuse. "It is possible that an abuser could work in other facilities after being fired for abuse between the time of the allegation and the time they are registered online. If they are not listed on the registry, there is no way to track misconduct other than a routine background check, which does not catch everything," she said.

The MR/DD Superintendent explained that once a person is listed on the abuse registry, he or she is forever banned from working with mentally retarded patients in Ohio. The abuser's name will remain on the registry for a minimum of five years. Ohio employers are required to check the abuser registry before hiring an applicant and are encouraged to periodically check employee's names with the system. In a recent case, it took three years between when a resident at a local home complained of being threatened and when the abuser was finally listed on the registry.

Because many of the accusers of abuse are mentally and cognitively impaired and may be confused about the intentions or body language of a care worker, investigations into abuse must be especially complete. "We have to be fair to everyone, including the person being accused of abuse. The truth comes out during the process and even if abuse is substantiated, the accused must be allowed due process," she said.

Superintendent Zeitler recognizes that the system is not perfect, but she believes that it is a good system. "This is a process in which we try to be as thorough and fair in our investigation as possible. We are not dragging our feet through investigations, but given the circumstances, we have to be as thorough as possible," she said.

## **Buddy Walk, Ride set for Sept. 9**

Aug 31, 2006

The 2006 ARC of Ashtabula County Buddy Walk and Ride will be Sept. 9 at Lake Shore Park.

Registration for the Buddy Ride with motorcycles will begin at 10 a.m. with the last bike going out at 11:30 a.m. Registration for the Buddy Walk will begin at 1 p.m. and the Walk will begin at 2 p.m. All registrations are at the large pavilion by the Lake. Riders and Walkers will all meet at the Large Pavilion for food, entertainment, and prizes. The Buddy Walk and Ride will go on rain or shine. The proceeds of The Arc of Ashtabula County Buddy Walk will benefit both NDSS and The Arc of Ashtabula County.

The Arc of Ashtabula County founded Happy Hearts School and provides ongoing support to Happy Hearts School and Ashcraft Industries as well as other services for those with mental retardation and their families.

## **MR/DD Employees Auction Cold Snowmen for Palm- Warm Cash**

*Dec 14, 2006*

*Showing off their snow men and women are, from left, Mary Lou Moody, Nancy Frey, Lisa Fuller-Grippi, Vicki Sylvester, and Julie Spangler.*

Frosty and his cool and smooth wooden pals have rolled into town to help raise money for the Ashtabula County Board of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities' United Way campaign.



"This year, the five departments of the MR/DD have each decorated a snowman that will be raffled off to our employees and all the money will go the United Way," said Lisa Fuller-Grippi, service support administrator for MR/DD's Community Support Services.

Tom Rose of Rose Lumber in Conneaut



donated the wood and Greg Stolfer, a shop teacher at Edgewood Senior High School, cut out the snowmen for the project, Lisa said. Each of the snowmen, or snowwomen, stand about five feet tall and were creatively decorated by employees of Happy Hearts School, Ash/ Craft Industries, Transportation, the MR/ DD Board Office, and Community Support Services.

"Our goal this year is to raise \$975,000 for the 26 local agencies we support," said Randy Jones, executive director of the United Way of Ashtabula County. "Every year, the MR/ DD does such a wonderful job of raising money for us."

"About 35 people contributed their creativity by donating supplies or helping to decorate our snowman," said Deborah Hill, Ash Craft activities coordinator. said. "We all had a great time, and the campaign enables us to help others who are less fortunate."

## 2007

### Shiny Floors and Faces Open School at Happy Hearts School



Wednesday August 29, 2007  
*Kim Lambert (center) a teacher's assistant at Happy Hearts School works with Zach Henson (left) fifteen, and Alice Kangas, 13, the first day of school at Happy Hearts. Ashtabula Star Beacon photo by Warren Dillaway*

Shiny floors, shiny faces, and equally bright bulletin boards greeted students at Happy Hearts School on their first day back from summer vacation. Happy Hearts provides education and inspiration to developmentally disabled and mentally retarded pupils ages 3 to 21 living in Ashtabula County.

"My kids did wonderful. They came in happy, they stayed happy all day and went home happy," said Michelle Bentley who is a special education teacher of the primary age group. "I'm excited to see how they will develop new friendships and try new things," she said.

"We are looking forward to a very productive year," said Michael DeMarino who is the director of educational services. "Our focus, as always, is to provide the best educational environment and support for our students and their families." He also praised the maintenance and teaching staff for all their hard work in getting the building ready for school. "Thanks to their dedication, we have a safe and

attractive learning environment.”

Elaine Marcy who has been the school nurse for more than 17 years, said it is always exciting to see how the kids have grown and progressed over the summer. “The first day always brings challenges, but we work through them one at a time and then by the end of the first week it all just flows,” she said.

One of the newer members of the Happy Hearts teaching staff, Michelle Diemer, who is the advanced age special education teacher, said every day is interesting and exciting, not just the first day. “It is a new school year with new routines, new friends, and new adjustments for everyone,” she said.

*Fourth Annual Buddy Walk and Ride  
September 6, 2007*



*Ray Herrmann (left), Eric Herrmann (center) and Christie Church, all of Conneaut, walk during the Buddy Walk and Ride, an annual benefit for the Association for Retarded Citizens at Lake Shore Park Saturday.*

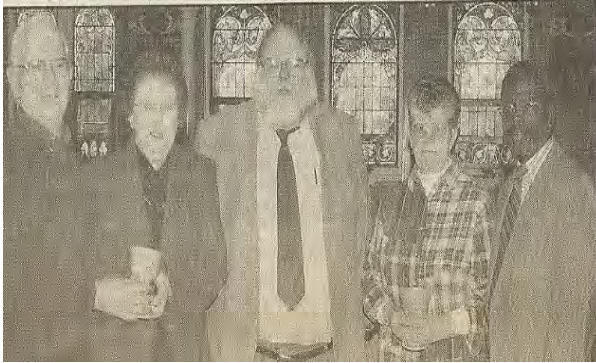
The fourth annual Buddy Walk and Ride will take place Saturday rain or shine at Lakeshore Park in Ashtabula Township. The Association for Retarded Citizens of Ashtabula County sponsored the event to raise awareness and acceptance of all people with mental and physical disabilities. Proceeds benefited ARC and the National Down Syndrome Society.

**Blue Notes**

The Happy Hearts Ashcraft/Christmas party held at the Elks Lakefront Lodge 208 on Lake Road on December 18, 1986. The Elks Lodge, sheriff's department, Joe Lovas Insurance and Mike's Farm Market helped to make the party a success for the more than 250 who attended.

## **Inez and Stanley Gaumer Win Cup of Cold-Water Award**

December 16, 2007



*Reverend John Germaine (center) poses with winners of the Cup of Cold-Water awards presented by the Ashtabula Area Ministerial Association. The awards were presented at a Thanksgiving week service that shed light on work done for the benefit of the community.*

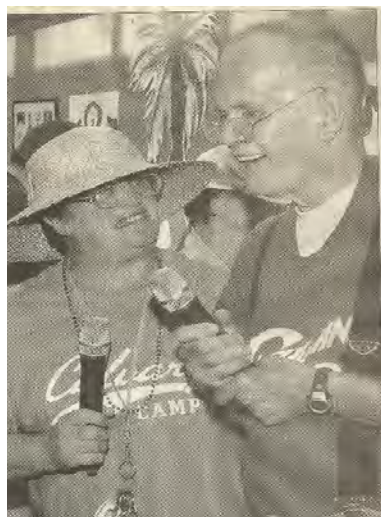
*(From left) Stanley and Inez Gaumer, Reverend Germaine, Jeri Bell, and Reverend Neroy Carter. Ashtabula Star Beacon photo by Warren Dillaway.*

Jeri Bell was honored for her service as a hospice clown and for providing lap quilts for people who need them. Reverend Neroy Carter of New Hope Pentecostal Church helped deliver more than five hundred wheelchairs to Nigeria. He was also honored for his work in making affordable housing available for senior citizens and physically disabled people.

Going the extra mile was recently honored by the Ashtabula Area Ministerial Association. Two individuals and a couple received “Cups of Cold Water” awards for their service to the community, said Reverend John Germaine of First United Methodist in Ashtabula. He said the cups are handcrafted by Jim Anderson, a United Methodist minister from Chardon. “It is a community service award that is given to individuals or groups that is given for service beyond the church in the community,” he said.

Stanley and Inez Gaumer, of First Presbyterian Church in Ashtabula, were honored for decades of service to the mentally retarded and developmentally disabled. For 38 years Inez Gaumer taught an ecumenical Sunday School class for mentally retarded students. She said her husband Stan also helped with Boy Scouts and Special Olympics. The Gaumer’s also worked on seventeen levy campaigns for the Mental Retardation and Developmentally Disabilities Board during the last 47 years, Inez Gaumer said. She said she also worked on state and national boards dealing with special needs issues. Inez is a past president of the women’s association of the church and is also a church elder.

2008



### **Ash/Craft Rewards Clients with An Awards Party**

*Richard Mast and Bonnie Kray enjoy singing karaoke Friday at the Ash/Craft end of the summer picnic and awards ceremony. August 23, 2008. Ash/Craft clients also participated in various carnival themed activities, played cornhole and took photos. “The clients have all ranges of activities,” said Nancy Ballen, Ash/Craft nurse. “Some of them work in the community, ”There are twelve groups and three classrooms at the facility. A worker within each work group that the teacher recommends was the recipient of an award*

*Friday. “It’s positive reinforcement for the work they’ve done,” Nancy Ballen said. August 23, 2008. Ashtabula Star Beacon photo .*

### **Buddy Walk Raises Money for Special Needs People**

Oct 12, 2008

*More than one hundred people walked in the Fifth Annual Buddy Walk at Lakeshore Park in Ashtabula Township, Sunday afternoon. Ashtabula Star Beacon photo by Warren Dillaway.*



More than one hundred people gathered Sunday afternoon to help support special people with special needs. Inez Gaumer, co-chairwoman with Terry Mate, said the fifth annual Buddy Walk was a success as people of all ages were lining up to walk a mile through Lake Shore Park. “The march is to raise awareness of Down Syndrome. Inez stressed that people with Down’s Syndrome are people first and are capable of being educated and accomplishing much in their lives.

Organizers honored individuals and families who raised the most money by allowing them to help lead the walk. The Sundquist family raised \$900 and Claude Gaumer \$509. Inez said the final tabulation of how much was raised would not be completed until mid-week.

Maria Kovacs of Ashtabula joined the walk because of a family connection. “My little sister has Down Syndrome,” she said while starting the walk with dozens of similarly clad walkers in their white and blue tee shirts.

Forgiven, an Ashtabula County Christian Motorcyclist Association, coordinated a ride that raised \$500, said club president Jim Short.

Co-chairwoman Gaumer said proceeds from the event will help a developmentally disabled support group fund a variety of projects at Happy Hearts School and Ash/Craft. She said the group sends kids to camp, conducts dances, purchases equipment, and provides workshops for parents and staff.

The National Down Syndrome Association coordinates similar walks across the country. A lot of local sponsors helped make the event possible, she said.

### **Voters Endorse MM/DD Renewal Levy**

November 4, 2008

Voters rallied behind a 10-year, 2-mill renewal for the Ashtabula County MR/DD, which oversees Happy Hearts School and Ash/Craft. The measure was endorsed by an unofficial 26,367-16,277 total.

2009

### **Ash/Craft Greenhouse Opens in New Building**

April 23, 2009



*Richard Stewart stands next to the collectibles display at the Ash/Craft Garden Shoppe on Green Road. Bill West took the Ashtabula Star Beacon photo.*

Excitement swirls inside the new Ash/Craft Greenhouse and Garden Shoppe like dandelion seeds blown in the outside wind. From 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Saturday, the new greenhouse and Garden Shoppe will be hosting a grand opening to launch the new season. The Ash/Craft Greenhouse and Garden Shoppe are part of Ash/Craft Industries, 5959 Green Road, between Happy Hearts School and the Ash/Craft workshop.

Ash/Craft Industries is a nonprofit organization that serves the MR / DD adult population with vocation and social skills training, sheltered work shop, community job training and placement services and an adult day activity program, said Lynda Perry who is the director of adult services. “The Garden Shoppe is so nice. They did a beautiful job,” said Anne Zeitler, superintendent of the Ashtabula County Board of Mentally Retarded/Developmentally Developed.

Now that the greenhouse has moved from behind the bus garage to its new location along Green Road, it has doubled its former size, allowing Ash/Craft to expand its inventory to include more fall and winter plants and allow the greenhouse, as well as the Garden Shoppe, to be open all year.

“We are all so excited about the move in this direction,” said Sandy Bennett, activities specialist with Ash/Craft for 28 years who has been working with the consumers on many of the garden gift items for sale in the Garden Shoppe. The workers at the greenhouse are officially known as consumers, because of their MR / DD status as verified and defined by the state of Ohio.

According to Sandy, her consumers will soon be creating fall items and something extra special for the Christmas season. “We are going to start developing an annual Christmas ornament made by our consumers,” she said.

Just some of the unique items visitors will find in the Garden Shoppe are “Carson” wind chimes, garden-related gift items, bird feeders, bird houses, T-shirts, tote bags, shirts and hoodies with the new Ash/Craft logo, nautical theme items, landscape decorations, Adirondack chairs made by the Edgewood High School woodshop students, and consumer made corn-hole games.

The inside of the greenhouse is bursting with stunning floral varieties by the flat, hanging baskets, window boxes, urns and more. “We have many new varieties of annuals, perennials, grasses, herbs and vegetables,” Director Perry said. “There are many things here like large flower black- eyed Susan’s and the unique screw grass that you can’t get at a big box store.”

**Ash/Craft Greenhouse Ribbon Cutting  
May 3, 2009, Kingsville Township.**

Fine weather and a good cause highlighted the April 25th grand opening ceremony of the new Ash/Craft Greenhouse and Garden Shoppe on Green Road in Kingsville Township. The new facility is twice the size of the original greenhouse built in 1979 and will be open year around. A variety of garden and gift notions are sold in the new shop, located adjacent to Happy Hearts and Ash/Craft Industries. Members of the Ash/Craft and MR/DD Boards attended the ceremony.

Peggy Carlo, Ashtabula County Commissioner, presented a proclamation to the group. Jerry Russell, employee of the greenhouse for 25 years, helped cut the ribbon.

Superintendent Anne Zeitler, in her opening remarks, welcomed the group and presented a history of the operation.

2010

**Woodworking Department at Ash/Craft Revived  
March 8, 2010**

Claude Gaumer sands the top of a picnic table at Ash/Craft Industries. The woodworking department was revived this last year after a 16- year hiatus.



Woodworking is the latest opportunity for clients at Ash/Craft industries. Between 150 to 170 developmentally disabled adults work at Ash/Craft Industries creating a variety of products, said Ash/Craft Industries Production Manager Jim Hornbeck. People kept talking about the picnic tables the clients (Ash/Craft workers) built years ago, Hornbeck said.

He said the administrators decided to bring wood working back late last spring.

The picnic tables were built at Ash/Craft between 1980 and 1993 said Linda Moroski, Workshop Specialist. “We’re kind of starting from scratch,” she said of moving her group from floor production to woodworking. She pointed out that several of her clients, including Claude Gaumer, worked in the woodworking area

before it was closed. “Claude probably remembers more than I do,” she laughs.

According to Linda, fifteen people are employed in the woodworking area, but that will likely be reduced to eight to ten clients who really enjoy the work and have some proficiency in the craft. In the past year they have sold 40 to 50 cornhole boards and about two dozen picnic tables, Linda said. “We couldn’t keep up with the orders.”

The picnic tables cost \$120 for a 4-foot model to \$175 for the 8-foot table. They are made from treated lumber. Corn hole games range in price from \$105 to \$160. The workshop also builds garden benches and tables and works with Edgewood Senior High School woodshop students on a line of Adirondack chairs. Ash/Crafts garden shop opens May 1. To place an order before then, call 224-2177. Delivery is available.

### **MR/DD Board Seeks Renewal Levy**

Ashtabula County Board of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities Seeks Renewal of 1.33-mill levy, October 26, 2010

The Ashtabula County Board of Developmental Disabilities is hoping Ashtabula County voters will once again vote favorably at the polls on November 2nd. The Board has placed a 1.33 mill renewal levy on the ballot. “For more than 50 years, the Board has served special needs individuals and their families,” said Superintendent Anne Zeitler. “This is not a new tax and will not increase anyone’s taxes.”

The levy is for the current operating expenses of the Board, which includes Happy Hearts School, Ash/Craft Industries, Early Intervention Program, Pre-School Services, Adult Services, Community Employment, Adult Day Care Services, Community Support Services, Transportation Services, and Investigative Support Services. The levy is over seven years (2010- 2016) and will generate about two million dollars per year for the next seven years. It is imperative that the levy passes or we will immediately lose two million dollars,” Superintendent Zeitler said. The Board serves about five hundred individuals today. “Our funding from the State of Ohio continues to decrease and we are very dependent on our local support, and we are very grateful to the community’s support for us for all of these years,” she said.



## Timeline- 2000-2010

### **Special Olympians Win February 10, 2000**

The Ashtabula County Special Olympics group recently took part in the winter games at the Cuyahoga National Recreation Park and came away with numerous honors. Among the local winners in the Nordic Skiing competition were:

Jeff Schultz, gold medalist in the five hundred meter 2.37 and gold medalist in the 1-kilometer, 3.59.

William Griswold, silver medalist in the 500-meters, 6.42 and silver medalist in the 100- meters, 51.08.

Jim Flower, silver medalist in the 500-meters, 4.48 and bronze medalist in the one hundred meters, 55.28.

Scott Mather, bronze medalist in the 500-meters, 5.15, and bronze medalist in the 100- meter, 57.77 and Rosemarie Perry, silver medalist in the one hundred meters, 3.39. November 11, 2000

### **Fund raiser benefits Happy Hearts School.**

Employees of Adelphia Cable raised more than \$1,000 for Happy Hearts School, enabling therapists to buy new physical therapy equipment.

November 18, 2000

### **Plan to Move the Retarded Criticized**

Private groups supporting the rights of the mentally retarded are divided over a project to move some people out of state-run centers into community-based settings such as group homes.

2001

Gazette. April 26, 2001. Masons, representing all the Masonic lodges in Ashtabula County, presented a \$1,500 check to Pam Burnett and Connie Payne, co-chairpersons of the Booster Club fund raising committee to help finance the county Special Olympics athlete's trip to the Summer Games in Columbus in June.

June 19, 2001. Police officers from a variety of area law enforcement agencies put on their running shoes and hit the road to run to raise money for Special Olympics during the Law Enforcement Torch Run.

Dave Dvorak, financial secretary, Jefferson Council of Knight of Columbus, presented a check to Pam Burnett, treasurer, Ashtabula County Special Olympics on December 5, 2001.

2002

March 13, 2002

Virginia A. Soliday, who attended Happy Hearts School for many years and worked at Ash/Craft Industries died on March 12, 2002.

August 2002

MR/DD Superintendent Larry Korland retired August 1 after three years as superintendent and more than 30 years of service in the field. Anne Zeitler, former Director of Educational Services, replaced him.

2003

The Ashtabula County Board of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities met on September 20, 2003, and among other actions approved an agreement with Geneva Area City Schools to continue satellite classrooms in the district. The Board also reminded parents Parent Information Night would be held on September 24 at Happy Hearts School.

The Board heard from the Levy Committee about its ongoing campaign to get the 1.33 mill operating levy passed in November. They are planning a fundraiser for the week of September 29-October 5 at the Put-Out Golf course at the Ashtabula Mall.

The 2003 Ash/Craft Industries, Inc. Board of Directors. Reverend Stephen Long, Chair; Elva Roux, Vice-Chair; Joseph Massi, Secretary-Treasurer; Randy Blum; Richard Flower; Jim Moyer; Robert Norton; Sue Ellen Foote; Hiram Lynch.

2004

Board members of the Ashtabula County Board of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities in 2004 were Ron Tate, president; Mrs. Miriam Cartner; Don Cosner; Mrs. Janet Neville; and Mrs. Mary Ellen Coneglio. Committee were Renee Bell; Sue Bland; Cindy Osburn-Bucci; Cindy Campbell; Alice Cook; Michael W. De Marino; Inez Gaumer; Maureen Hamblin; David Kinter; Jim Kiser; Mo Krumins; Vicki Moyer; and Pat Mundi-Potts.

The ARC of Ashtabula County held its first Buddy Walk in October 2004 which benefitted people with disabilities or mental retardation and their families.

2005

After receiving funds under the Community Alternative Funding System for about 15 years, the board expects to lose those funds by June 30 this year, according to Superintendent Anne Zeitler.

While this puts extra pressure on the board, she said the plan is to address these new challenges creatively.

Happy Hearts School and Ash/Craft Industries held open houses to celebrate their 50th anniversary of operations, in September 2005. According to this account of the beginning of the School these couples were founding couples

Present at the Creation

The history of Happy Hearts School and the Ashtabula County Board of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities can be traced back to a meeting of concerned parents in March 1954 at which the Ashtabula County Council for Retarded Citizens was formed. Those at the meeting were: Mr. and Mrs. Paul Berg; Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Kapen; Mr. and Mrs. G.L. Klozar; Mr. and Mrs. Gene Moroski; Mr. and Mrs. James Toomey; Mr. and Mrs. Steven Weintz; Mr. and Mrs. John Wilkinson

2006

April 26, 2006. More than 150 people work at Ash/Craft Industries in Kingsville Township.

July 18, 2006. A Balloon launch held July 14 during the annual Ash/Craft Industries shop picnic had a patriotic theme. The names and addresses of service men with connections to the sheltered workshop's staff were attached to colorful balloons and launched to float for freedom. The tags encouraged whoever found the balloons to send a card to the serviceman. Nicole Spangler; Barb Ignor; Sandy Bennett; Audrey Thomas; Annette Montgomery; Angela Copeland; and Jenny Richardson helped with the launch. Nancy Vallen, mother of Pfc Aaron Vallen and Vickie Moyer, mother of Lt. Capt. Adam Moyer also helped send the balloons on their mission.

2007

The Association for Retarded Citizens of Ashtabula County sponsored its fourth annual Buddy Walk and Ride at Lakeshore Park on September 8, 2007. The Association sponsors the event to raise awareness and acceptance of all people with mental and physical disabilities. Proceeds benefit ARC and the National Down Syndrome Society.

### **Remembering Them.**

Judith J. Cusano, a bus driver of Happy Hearts for years, died January 12, 2007.

Duane C. Dickson. He was active in the Ashtabula County Mentally Retarded Association and served on the Transportation Committee. He died March 30, 2007. Biddiana M. Kohowski, involved with the Ashtabula County Mental Retardation/Developmental Disabilities Board. She died on June 26, 2007.

2008

Remember...

Elva I. Roux originated and was very involved in the Summer Recreation Program at MR/DD. She has served on the Ash/Craft Board for many years and was currently Vice-Chairman and served on the Ashtabula County Council for Mentally Retarded Citizens. She was also very involved in Special Olympics and worked in many other capacities for the mentally handicapped. She died on December 10, 2008.

December 19, 2008. Ron Tate Honored for Service on MR/DD Board. Ron Tate served on the Board for 12 years, and during his tenure services to infants, children, adults with developmental disabilities and their families were maintained and improved.

2009

April 23, 2009. Ash/Craft Opens Greenhouse in New Building.

July 1, 2009. The Ashtabula County Special Olympics Track team saved its best performance for the Ohio Special Olympics Special Games this weekend. The male relay team was running fifth of five teams after the first leg and ended up winning the race. "John Henson picked up two spots in the second leg, Ashtabula County Special Olympics track coach Casey Wludyga said. Adam Henson picked up two more places, and in the final leg, Chris McGuire overtook the leader at the end."

2010

February 11, 2010. Nearly 90 Ashtabula County adults with developmental disabilities will celebrate Valentine's Day Friday evening at the Simak Welcome Center with a dinner and dance. The event is a project of Soldiers of Independence, a local organization that provides socialization opportunities for adults with special needs.

July 16, 2010. The Ashtabula County Board of Developmental Disabilities will seek renewal of a 1.33 mill operating levy from voters on November 2nd. The

Board voted June 17 to place the renewal on the ballot. The levy expired in tax year 2009, so the final collection will be made this year.

September 16, 2010. Inez Gaumer cut the ribbon for a new playground at Happy Hearts School after 11 years of planning and fund raising. Inez led a committee of six people who worked on the project for more than a decade.

## Special Story- The Happy Hearts Playground

January 15, 2010. The ARC of Ashtabula County, a citizens group that brought the Happy Hearts School into being more than 50 years ago, has been raising money for a new playground at the school since the early 1990s.

Thanks to a \$50,000 Community Development block grant, the \$123,829 playground will become a reality this summer. Commissioners on Tuesday approved a contract with Spectra Contract Flooring of Valley View, which will provide and install new playground equipment, sidewalks, and fencing, as well as properly prepare the site. "We're happy to get this project underway," said Janice Switzer, program manager for the county's Department of Community Services. Switzer worked with ARC to secure funding through the 2008 CDBG grant. ARC is also drawing upon \$44,593 from the Board of Developmental Disabilities and \$29,236 of ARC's funds to pay the contractor.

The money provided by the Board came from memorials and other donations, not taxpayer support. ARC has additional funds it plans to use for picnic tables, benches, and similar amenities. The playground should be completed by the time the new school year begins.

May 30, 2010. Playground Committee members for Happy Hearts School hold a drawing of the new playground planned for the School.



*From left are Cathy Simons, Elaine Marcy, Moe Krumins, Inez Gaumer, Patty Fields, and Vicky Sylvester  
Ashtabula Star Beacon phot by Carl E. Feather*

The existing playground's equipment is old and unsafe; the swings were removed years ago because they did not meet state standards. Teachers will be able to use the new equipment

for physical education classes as well as other instruction involving large and even fine motor skills.

There is still the matter of the \$4,000 shortfall, as well as landscaping and incidentals. Because the plans had to be pared back, the group will need to continue to raise money for the expensive equipment. Individuals or organizations interested in assisting the group with this final push should call Inez Gaumer or call the school and ask for Vicki Sylvester.



### **Quilt Donated**

*May 29, 2006. Kingsville Quilters. From left Pat Sarell; Cynthia Ingram; Ken Schmiesing, director of education services; Carol Sowry; Marion Bartone; Ginny Cosner and Glenna Rodenbaugh donated a quilt to Arc of Ashtabula County for a new playground at Happy Hearts School. The quilt was raffled and raised \$1,830. Cindy Blank of Conneaut was the winner. Also not pictured was quilter Linda Nicka. Fund raising for the*

*playground is ongoing. Donations may be sent to Ken Schmiesing at Happy Hearts School.*

Inez Gaumer, past president of ARC, headed up the playground committee, which has been together “longer than most people have been married,” she said. Its work began back in 1998, and through the years they slowly built up the fund. Elaine Marcy said the staff held Chinese auctions of donated items, sold submarine sandwiches and popcorn, and raffled a quilt to generate money for the playground. They also sold commemorative bricks which will be at the center of the playground. The staff is not allowed to solicit donations from or sell fund raising items to people outside the building, so all the money they raised is from within their circle.

Vicki Sylvester points out that they were also raising funds for other causes during this time, like the school prom. ARC solicited funds outside the school. Inez Gaumer says there have been many, many donations. Some of the major ones were \$25,000 from the Ashtabula Foundation, \$5,000 from Louise Raffa; \$5,000 from the East Ashtabula Club; \$4,000 from the Ohio Attorney General; and \$1,000 from First Presbyterian Church. A relative of Inez’s’ husband gave \$500.

ARC shook every tree in search of cash, but still came up far short of the \$150,000 needed. A Community Development Block grant, obtained with assistance from Janice Switzer of the Ashtabula County Community Services Department, sealed the deal. The \$50,000 grant came through this year and allowed the project to finally go out for bids. Inez says engineers are reviewing those bids to make sure they meet all the specifications. They hope to award the project in the near future and follow that with a groundbreaking. The plan is to have the playgrounds ready for use by the time students return to school in late August.

### **New Playground is Dedicated**

September 16, 2010

*Inez Gaumer (center with scissors) cut the ribbon for a new playground at Happy Hearts School*

*After 11 years of planning and fund raising. Inez led a committee of six people who worked on the project for more than a decade.*

*Ashtabula Star Beacon  
photo by Warren Dillaway.*



The children stand, politely but impatiently waiting...

It took more than a decade for the adults working to turn the dream of a playground for them into reality. On Saturday afternoon more than seventy people gathered at Happy Hearts School to celebrate the completion of a playground project. “We started out gradually, then I started writing grants and making phone calls,” said Inez Gaumer who helped organize the committee that also included Vicki Sylvester; Elaine Marcy; Moe Krumins; Patty Fields; and Kathy Simon.

“We do not have all the bills, but we can say it will be over \$150,000,” Inez said of the price tag for the park that has two distinctive areas for children to play. She thanked the Ashtabula County Commissioners for helping the Committee receive a \$50,000 Community Development Block Grant. She said the Ashtabula Foundation Investment Management Agency gave \$25,000 to the project. Five donors gave more than \$5,000, including the Edna H. Burrington Memorial; Knights of Columbus; the Robert S. Morrison Foundation; East Ashtabula

Educational Assistance Corporation; The Raymond M. Winger Memorial; US Bank; Geraldine Thomas in memory of Betsy Thomas.

Happy Hearts Board Superintendent Anne Zeitler thanked Inez for the committee's persistence in staying with the idea for such a long time. She said the group had planted a seed more than ten years ago and then nurtured it to fruition. "The children are going to love this playground. We thank all of you who were involved in this project," Zeitler said.

After a short ribbon-cutting ceremony, the children dashed into the playground area to play.

### Blue Notes

Linda Porcello, Transportation Coordinator

September 24, 1989

Linda Porcello, transportation coordinator for Happy Hearts School and Ash/Craft Industries has received a letter of commendation from Ohio Department of Transportation for an article which she had published the August-September 1989 issue of "School Bus Fleet," a national transportation magazine.

In her article, Linda described the unusual busing problems that drivers of the Happy Hearts System face, including passengers ranging in age from 7 months to 67 years and all mentally retarded or developmentally disabled. "There are some special problems we are always dealing with. We have passengers with a variety of medical problems. We have passengers who are nonverbal. We have passengers with behavior problems. We have seizure problems. And we have only seven bus aides for our twenty-seven buses," she said. Because of her deep concern for bus safety, Linda helped organize a school bus safety committee comprised of two bus drivers, Cheryl Lutes, and Cis Plats; three buses aides Carolyn Porter; Rick Walker; and Sandi Kinicki, and a parent volunteer, Jean Fields.

The committee recently implemented a week-long program at Happy Hearts School for students and Ash/Craft workshop clients. The program included a safety segment in each class, safety skills with drivers and aides as actors; flyers and coloring books on safety; designed "colors for safety" such as blue look both ways, red, be quiet at crossing, etc.; safety bulletin boards, safety material sent home to parents and more.



## Chapter Seven-Challenges and Changes-2011-2018



*Rainbows can be painted on shirts as well as the sky.*

### **MR/DD Board and Media Company Win State Award**

March 31, 2011

“Abilities in Motion,” a video that the Ashtabula County Board of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities and Media Magic of New

Lyme Township won the Ohio Public Images Award of Excellence for 2011. Ohio Public Images Network sponsors the annual media and awareness awards competition to honor Ohio individuals and organizations creating a greater understanding of people with developmental disabilities.

According to MR/DD Board Superintendent Anne Zeitler, Ashtabula County competed with entries from much larger counties with more plentiful resources, but still emerged the winner. “We were very proud of that,” she told county commissioners Peggy Carlo and Joseph Moroski who held their meeting at the Happy Hearts School recently.

Marlene Sartini, the Board’s Director of Community Services, said the video took about six months to create and features the Board’s entire program from early intervention to caring for retirees from the sheltered workshop. “We designed and wrote it internally and Media Magic assisted with the production, which featured staff, clients, and their families. They easily found enthusiastic supporters to go on camera and share their enthusiasm for the contributions the Board has made to their lives. “Everyone had an opportunity to say something. The most poignant comments were from parents of the clients who have been served here.”

The ten-minute video has been shown on local public access channels and will be made available on DVD through the county’s libraries.

The Ashtabula County Commissioners presented Superintendent Zeitler and her staff with a proclamation recognizing March 2011 as Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month.

## **Ash/Craft Industries Offers Shredding Service**

April 1, 2011



*Billy Campbell feeds documents into a shredder at the Ash/Craft Industries Workshop. The Workshop's new shredding service is thirty-five cents per pound of documents shredded. Ashtabula Star Beacon photo by Carl Feather.*

Ash/Craft Production Manager Jim Hornbeck locks his newest piece of machinery up inside a chain link fence, guarding his unburied treasure. His treasure is a paper shredder, a tool that can quickly rip stacks of checks or boxes of business documents into spaghetti paper strips impossible to put back together.

Jim explains that he recently guided Ash/Craft into the shredding business because Ashtabula County did not have a readily available shredding service and more importantly, the shredding business matched up well with many of the disabled workers at the Workshop. "We talked to some other developmental disabilities programs in the state and learned that they had started the service," he said.

Although he wanted to have a special building for his shredder, Jim realized that Ash/Craft could not afford special quarters for his treasure, so instead he picked an area in the production space for the shredder. His treasure sits in a gated, locked space plainly visible from his office. Clients who want to be absolutely certain their documents are shredded can watch from the comfort of his office to make sure the job is done.

The shredding service costs thirty-five cents per pound of shredded documents. Jim said that customers can drop off small amounts of material at Ash/Craft and businesses and people with large amounts of documents can arrange for a pickup for a ten-dollar charge. He said that the Workshop provides a certificate of destruction with every finished job. A recycler picks up scrap paper from Mohawk Papers in Saybrook Township and makes a stop for Ash/Craft shredded paper

before taking the load to a recycling facility in Cleveland.

As well as providing an essential service, the shredder also helps the Ashtabula County Board of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities fulfill its mission of providing developmentally disabled people with productive work. According to Jim, Ash/Craft is always looking for jobs its workers can perform, and clients (workers) can do shredding on an hourly basis and can be paid the minimum wage. "Some of these people in this workshop live on that paycheck, and some of their families, too," he said.

Production Manager Hornbeck said that Ash/Craft Industries weathered the economic recession fairly well, because of diversification and customers coming from as far away as Cleveland, Ohio, and Jamestown, New York. As well as performing assembly and packaging at Ash/Craft, some of its workers also hold jobs outside of the workshop. He added that Ash/Craft is currently in the middle of a contract job for Ashtabula County wineries and woodshop employees are making and painting 320 wood signs shaped like an arrow. The Ash/Craft art department will paint the name of a winery and the distance to it and the arrows will be placed on a pole at every one of the participating wineries. It will repeat the same project for every other Ohio winery.

The Ash/Craft garden shop and greenhouse will open for the growing season on Monday offering flower and vegetable plants and items including wind chimes, garden decorations and furniture built the in Ash/Craft workshop for sale.

### **MR/DD Board Seeks Renewal of Levy**

July 14, 2011

The Ashtabula County Board of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities is cautiously approaching renewal of the operating levy that expires at the end of the year. On Tuesday, the Ashtabula County Commissioners endorsed the necessity of renewing the one-half mill levy that voters first approved in 1990 and the levy will be placed on the November ballot as a renewal with a term of seven years.

According to the MR/DD Board Director of Finance Lori Burdick, the levy has been generating about \$430,000 annually, an amount based on 1990 tax valuations, but she said she has not received the new certified figure from the auditor. As property values have increased, the effective millage has decreased protecting property owners from tax inflation.

Board President Janet Neville, Director of Finance Burdick, and Board Superintendent Anne Zeitler, met with County Commissioners, the County Auditor, and County Treasurer on July 7 to present the MR/DD Board's request. President Neville told the County Commissioners that the Board struggled with the decision to choose a renewal rather than a replacement, which would have generated more money. "Because of the economy, we don't feel we want to ask taxpayers to increase the amount they are asked to pay for the support of our programs," she said.

A replacement levy would be calculated on current real-estate valuations. Along with other county school districts, the Board has lost personal-property tax revenue and the state has not replaced it. For the next two years, the new state budget eliminates the phase-out assistance that helped alleviate the loss of that tax income. Director of Finance Burdick said the loss amounts to about one million a year for the MR/DD Board. The Board shared data with the Ashtabula County Commissioners that shows expenses would devour a cash surplus quickly in the next two years and slip into a deficit situation by 2014. Replacing instead of renewing the levy could have delayed the deficit until 2015. She said the earliest the Board could replace another operating levy is 2016, unless it attempted to replace a continuous levy with a higher-millage issue.

### **Letter to the Editor, Ashtabula Star Beacon**

November 26, 2011

On behalf of the Ashtabula County Board of Developmental Disabilities, we would like to publicly thank the voters of Ashtabula County for the passage of our levy. We are very fortunate to have the ongoing generous support of the citizens of Ashtabula County.

We would also like to publicly thank Barbara McClure and Jeanne Bento for volunteering their time in organizing and overseeing the efforts and fiscal responsibility of the Happy Hearts - Ash/Craft Levy Renewal Committee. Our employees, families and friends worked jointly with the levy committee to conduct a very successful levy campaign.

The Ashtabula County Board of Developmental Disabilities sincerely appreciates the commitment of our employees, families, friends, and the citizens of Ashtabula County to ensure the ongoing delivery of quality programs, services, and support to individuals with developmental disabilities.

Thank you for supporting Ashtabula County Board of Developmental Disabilities, Happy Hearts, and Ash/Craft Industries.

Janet Neville, Board President Anne M. Zeitler, Superintendent

2012

**Larry Moroski- One of Original Happy Hearts Students, Dies**

March 15, 2012. Larry G. Moroski, age 65, of Creek Road, Kingsville, died Thursday, March 15, 2012. He was born March 13, 1947, in Conneaut, the son of A. Gene and Nadine Keller Moroski, and lived in the area all of his life. His parents were instrumental in the founding of Happy Hearts School and Ash/Craft Industries and Larry attended Happy Hearts School from its beginning in 1955. He was one of the first students to graduate from Happy Hearts to Ash/Craft Industries.

Although a member of Kingsville Presbyterian Church, he attended Inez Gaumer's Sunday School class for special needs pupils at First Presbyterian Church in Ashtabula for 18 years, and he also was a Boy Scout and in the Leo Club at the Maples Home. Other activities he enjoyed included camping at Camp Cavalry, bowling, music, dancing, and participating in the Special Olympics.

**March is Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month**  
*Help Us Celebrate...*  
**OPEN HOUSE**  
March 8 • 10am-1pm

**Happy Hearts School**      **AshCraft Industries**  
2505 South Ridge Road E.      5959 Green Road  
Ashtabula, OH      Ashtabula, OH

**Community Support Services**  
500 West Main St. • Geneva, OH

**Ashtabula County**  
in Support  
**together**

## Happy Hearts Graduation, May 23, 2012



May 23, 2012

Maureen Hamblin, a student aide with Ashtabula Area City Schools, congratulates Johnathon Lee Peterson on receiving his diploma from Happy Hearts School on May 23, 2012. Johnathon also graduated from Lakeside High School on May 24, 2012.

Johnathon Lee Peterson's mother, Melissa Townsend, felt special pride and vindication when he graduated from Happy Hearts along with four other classmates on May 23, 2012. Doctors had told her that Johnathon would never walk or talk.

Not only did her son graduate, he delivered the address to the other four graduates and their families: Herman Eugene Bratton, Phillip John Carlo III, Shari Ann Nagle, and Corrine LeAnne Wellbaum.

Melissa said faith accounted for the success of her sons, Johnny, and Jimmy. Jimmy previously graduated from Edgewood Senior High. "If you believe in yourself and in God, you can accomplish anything," she said.

The Edgewood High School Band with Director Connie Sommers provided the music for the Happy Hearts graduation and the ARC of Ashtabula County hosted a reception for the graduates and their families as well as presenting each graduate with a gift. Michael W. DeMarino, Happy Heart's Director of Education, and Janet Neville, President of the MR/DD Board, conferred the diplomas.

### Blue Notes

Each student had their own story, from Special Olympics success, to being crowned prom king to belting out tunes in church. But each student is able to make a contribution to the community, and Happy Hearts has helped make that happen for them and their family.

## **Special Olympics Summer- Swimming and Bowling**



Thursday June 28, 2012  
Ashtabula County Special Olympics swimmers who completed the State Summer Olympic Games last week in Columbus were (front from left) Terri Church; Claude Gaumer; Kelly Mayle; Donneta Settles; and Beth Harley. Back from left,

Coach Marie Harley; Dalton McReynolds; Vickie Hippely; Coach Michael Barnes; Lela Holcomb; and Coach Barrie Bottorf.

Ashtabula County Special Olympic bowlers who competed at the Ohio State Summer Games in Columbus last week were Robert Hunter; Karen Miller; Jim Peterson; Aaron Plummer; Amy Jo Turner; John Peterson; Christina Stewart; Alex DeHaven; John Daniel. Coach Crystal Kelly.

2013

### **Happy Hearts Graduation, 2013**

May 30, 2013

Thomas Miles, speaker at the 2013 Happy Hearts graduation, defined a blessing as “a special favor or special gift.” He continued his definition by explaining, “In my life, and I’m sure the other graduates would also say, we have been blessed by the opportunities we have had at school, and through the people that have helped us find those opportunities,” he said.

Besides Thomas Miles, the other 2013 graduates were: Eric Andrew Hagenbaugh; Destiny R. Lagese; Marie R. Lagese; Jamie Paul Lister; Brittany L. Prince; Kodi Allen Renwick; Carly Marie Weber; and Christopher Henry West.

Teacher James Kaiser is proud of the Class of 2013, but he is proud of every graduating class. “This was a big year for the school, but I have been here 31 years and I can say that every year is a big year. We are always so proud of our

graduates,” he said.

Jim is especially proud of Destiny Lagese. “I had Destiny as my student for four years,” he said. “It has been a pleasure to see her succeed, to grow in the areas of reading, writing and math.”

Principal Patrick Guliano said this is his first year as the head of Happy Hearts. “My experience is in public schools and high schools. I have to say the graduations here are so much more emotional. We see these students grow in so many aspects. They show so much persistence.

So many people came together to make today special for these graduates,” Principal Guliano said. “We thank the Edgewood band, we thank the students, the parents, and the staff for doing their all to make today that much better.

”  
”

March is  
**Developmental Disabilities  
Awareness Month**  
*Approximately two of every 100 Americans  
have a Developmental Disability*

**Look Beyond**  
*“And See My Potential”*

**BRING YOUR  
UNWANTED  
OUTDATED  
DOCUMENTS  
TO US!**

**Shred Week**  
Ash/Craft Industries  
5959 Green Road  
Ashtabula, Ohio  
March 4-8, 2013 from 9 AM-2 PM

Support individuals with developmental disabilities in Ashtabula County by bringing your unwanted documents to us during Shred Week. Bring in your paper for shredding, the first forty pounds are free! (Additional shredding is only 35 cents per pound) For more info call Jim Hornbeck at 224-2177 or E-mail him at [jim.hornbeck@ashtabuladd.org](mailto:jim.hornbeck@ashtabuladd.org).

**Ashtabula County Board of  
Developmental Disabilities**  
OPEN HOUSE  
Visit Us On Thursday  
March 7, 2013, 10 AM-1 PM

**Happy Hearts School**  
2505 South Ridge East  
Ashtabula, Ohio

Services include: Early Intervention Help Me Grow, ages 0-3 years old; preschool for ages 3-5 years old; and school age services for ages 6-21 years old.



2014

March 21, 2014

### **Warriors Giving Back**

*Steve Kray and some members of the Edgewood Girls Basketball Team presented a check for \$712 to Ashtabula County Special Olympic Lakers Cathy Prine and Brian Flaucher at Happy Hearts School. The funds were raised when the Lakers took on the Mahoning County Indians.*



*John Pickett: Early Happy Hearts Graduate, Friendship Class, and a Smile Inez Gaumer, founder of the Interfaith Religion Class for mentally handicapped adults, helps students John Pickett and Steve Hinkle find a scripture.*

*The class was recognized on its 35th year during the Sunday worship service at First Presbyterian Church in Ashtabula in 2004.*

*Ashtabula Star Beacon photo by Carl Feather. Sunday March 16, 2014*

### **John E. Pickett, age 69, died on Thursday March 13, 2014.**

Born on January 15, 1945, in Ashtabula, he was the son of Margie Louise Johns and Edward Joseph Pickett. He was a resident of Ashtabula County Residential Services (Maples I) since August 1977. A graduate of Happy Hearts School, he worked at Ash/Craft Industries since 1967 until his semi-retirement in 2013,

John belonged to former Boy Scout Troop #24, the Leo Club, the Friendship Sunday School Class of the First Presbyterian Church in Ashtabula and the Bridge Class, First Baptist Church of Kingsville. John enjoyed drawing, listening to records, going on vacation, church camp, carousels, Ferris Wheels, having fun and good times. John will always be remembered for his amazing smile.

## Helping Hands Members Rise \$8,000 for Special Olympics

March 30, 2014



*Brian Sabo, President of Trucker's Helping Hands, presents a check for \$8,000 to Lad Marous, treasurer for Special Olympics. Also pictured are athletes Tiffany Peiton, Dillen Wludyga, Beth Harley and David Baker, and Beth Hudson, secretary for the Ashtabula County Special Olympics Trucker's. An Ashtabula Star Beacon photo*

The Trucker's Helping Hands held their second reverse raffle on March 8 with a sold-out main board and more than four hundred people in attendance. Trucker's Helping Hands presented Ashtabula Area Special Olympics with a check for \$6,000. The local Special Olympics raises funds to keep local programs going and to send athletes to the Ohio Special Olympic events and pays entrance fees for the state track and field events in Columbus, and expenses to send athletes to regional and state events. Lad Marous, treasurer for Ashtabula County Special Olympics, said the local chapter does not get a share of the Polar bear Plunge money. One of the main fund-raisers for the local Special Olympics is the annual spaghetti dinner. The dinner will be from 4 to 7 p.m. Apr 23 at the Happy Hearts School.

### **2015, 60 years and Counting Ash/Craft Up Close and Personal January 31, 2015**

Ash/Craft Industries, a sheltered workshop, looks like any other business with stacked boxes lining the floors and shelves of the busy warehouse. Employees thread their way through the stacks bound for their work stations or moving items for Premix, Apex, Ashtabula County Medical Center, and the Ohio Wine Associations that the workers have assembled.

A mammoth paper shredding operation takes place behind a fenced in area

protecting the confidential documents of customers to be shredded. In another room, workers inspect hundreds of boxes slated for Zippo lighters to be sure the logos are of high quality, the boxes all face the same direction, and they are ready to be shipped to another location to be packed with lighters. Production throughout the workshop hums by 9 a.m. and will continue until about 2:30 p.m., minus half an hour for lunch.

The operational patterns are the same between Ash/Craft and other industries, but the people are not. The 170 clients working at the Ash/Craft Sheltered Workshop have disabilities and Ash/Craft is allowed by law to pay some workers below minimum wage. Ash/Craft Production Manager Jim Hornbeck said, “We provide people with developmental disabilities the opportunity to be productive. Not everyone is able to work at the same level and do the same tasks. The key is fitting their skills to the jobs. They do not want your help or sympathy. They just want an opportunity.”

He explained that one of many jobs at the Workshop involves making heat trappers for water heaters and some workers can only produce ten per day while others can do one hundred. Even the workers who can only do limited production can earn some money. He said one employee who could only do about ten pieces a day saved up enough money to pay for her own haircut.

The companies using Ash/Craft workers benefit because the workers perform with dedication and high standards. Frank Stawicki of Premix said, “The service is great. We do not have any quality concerns.” He said that Ash/Craft workers are reliable and get the job done. “It is good for us. It is good for the community.”

The future of sheltered workshops across Ohio is in doubt because of changes in the Center for Medical Services waiver program which will not allow them to be used in settings that “have the effect of isolating people.” Since the government is likely to consider sheltered workshops to be isolating, the 60 Ash/Craft workers on the CMS waivers might not be able to continue to work at Ash/Craft. More than 72 percent of the Ashtabula County Board of Developmental Disabilities budget comes from local tax dollars, with the rest split between federal and state money.

The possibility of losing Ash/Craft devastates some parents who have tried to find their children jobs in the community. Kim Ryel and her 24-year-old son Matthew who has Down Syndrome tried placing him in a community job and prospective employers told her that he would take jobs from “typical” workers or he was too high risk from an insurance point of view. She even volunteered to work with him,

but labor laws prevented that. She said some businesses were sympathetic. but did not think they had a job that Matthew could do.

Eventually, Matthew got a job at Saybrook Landing working a four-hour shift a week, and although his employer treated him well, Kim said Matthew felt he never truly belonged. In the beginning Kim had been determined Matthew would not be in a sheltered workshop environment. She said that inclusion and acceptance was her “big thing.” Finally, she went to Ash/Craft and now she says she cannot believe she waited so long. “He loves it,” she said. Many workers already knew Matthew from the Special Olympics, which helped him feel welcome. “He is happy here. He has blossomed.”

Kim is also relieved that she does not have to worry about Matthew when he gets on the bus, because she knows where he is going and that he is going to be safe and cared about. “It puts my mind at ease,” she said.

Ash/Craft Employment Specialist Jan Church said that Kim and her son Matthew’s experience demonstrates that Ash/Craft can sometimes be a better fit and a way to prepare those with disabilities for a job in the community at a later time.

Parent Bernadette Cimorelli told a similar story. Her daughter Kayla, 24, graduated from Lakeside in 2009 and went to A-Tech until 2012, receiving training that included working at several locations. When Kayla finished at A-Tech, she and her mother filled out applications, but heard many of the same reasons for not hiring Kayla as Kim and Matthew Ryel had experienced.

“To think the Ash/ Crafts of the world are going to close and they’re going to be working in the private sector is never going to happen,” Bernadette Cimorelli said, adding “Kayla is upset, does not want to leave her job. She does not know where she would go.”

Michael Kirkman, Executive Director of Disability Rights Ohio which is lobbying the state to extensively overhaul its system believes that experiences like Matthew and Kayla’s show that more resources need to be used in helping make professional settings more accessible and helping businesses hire people with disabilities. He said his organization is not advocating that any services be cut, but that services in Ohio be expanded. “Ohio’s system should support any person who wants to live or work or spend their days in the community, regardless of the person’s needs,” he said.

Jan Church said Ash Craft officials fully believe in integration and work to achieve it, but they want to make sure the workshop remains an option for those who want it.

The future is uncertain. State officials have been holding meetings across Ohio explaining the new CMS Waiver rules, reviewing its recommendations to comply with the new federal regulations, discussing the shape of the new system, and receiving feedback on the proposed changes.

Until the issues are resolved, Bernadette said that Kayla will sit in her chair at Ash/Craft every day, sorting through Zippo lighter boxes and loving her job.

### **Ashtabula County Commissioners Support County Developmental Disabilities Board**

March 3, 2015

Despite the fact that state and federal law changes placed county involvement in employment services for developmentally disabled people at risk, the Ashtabula County Commissioners passed a resolution of support for the Ashtabula County Board of Developmental Disabilities during its meeting at Happy Hearts School. The resolution will not change the federal and state rulings, but it is a sign of support for the current system, and the Commissioners will forward the resolution to state representatives and senators and to the office of Governor John Kasich.

The Centers for Medicaid Services has enacted changes to Medicaid waivers that could deny day services and case management to county residents who depend on the waivers for employment opportunities and socialization. Until the Center for Medicaid Services proposed the new rules, the state of Ohio DD boards were permitted to use waivers to pay for day services and case management for eligible people.

The new rules sparked concerns about conflict of interest that were formerly addressed by a Firewall Document created by the state board and approved by CMS. The Firewall Document separated board functions and allowed them to administer case management services to about 90,000 people. CMS no longer recognizes the Firewall Document, and caregivers of clients at Ash/Craft and other county-based programs are worried that they will no longer be able to adequately serve clients. Commissioner Dan Claypool said that the fact that a bipartisan board objects to the CMS changes is a clear indicator that the changes would be a step

backwards in Ashtabula County.

A nonprofit advocacy group for disabled people called Disability Rights Ohio is also pushing the state DD Department for wider integration of disabled people into the community and including private case management providers in the system. The CMS changes also prohibit waivers to be used on services that it considers isolating such as sheltered workshops like Ash/Craft.

Lynda Perry, Director of Adult Services at Ash/Craft, which provides employment for about two hundred people believes that the Firewall Document ensured that disabled people were not simply being “funneled into the county board” and that county DD Boards must remain a choice for disabled people. She said that if the county commissioners in other counties passed resolutions like the Ashtabula County Commissioners did, it would send a definitive message supporting the current system which has been in place for at least a decade.

She added that as caregivers aged and could no longer take care of their disabled family members, the family would have no choice except to go on waivers residentially and for the day services. “What we are asking is that-while private providers may do a good job- we feel the County Board of Developmental Disabilities should remain a choice to administer these waivers. Otherwise, we are afraid that individuals will not have adequate services. We are hoping that they will resubmit the Firewall Document for reapproval.”

Ashtabula County Commissioners proclaimed March 2015 as Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month in the County and passed the resolution to support the County DD Board. The audience applauded and Ash/Craft Director of Operations, Steve McClure, applauded first. His 29-year-old son, is an Ash/Craft client who cannot walk, talk, or barely sit up on his own, but according to his father “the socialization he gets from Ash/Craft is irreplaceable. Ash /Craft is his life. His mother and I – we can just tell you how content he is when he comes home. He will have a huge void if this program closes.”

According to Director of Ash/Craft Operations McClure, if his son no longer received his day services waiver the state would have to pay more money. Since his son receives a Transitions Developmental Disability waiver meaning there is no bill for day services, Ash/Craft does not receive any state money for his case. Since his son cannot be left unattended, he would require a separate state waiver to pay for home care. “It would be a travesty to have this program closed for our whole family,” Steve McClure said. “It takes a special person to work out here, the way

they deal and provide service.”

President Commissioner Peggy Carlo said, “I do not know what people would do here without you. It is very near and dear to our hearts.”

### **Editorial: Happy Hearts, A Community Asset**

Ashtabula Star Beacon, May 28, 2015

One only needs to spend a few minutes at Happy Hearts school, which supports those students with developmental disabilities, to see just how extraordinary the staff and students are there. Staff members truly care about these outstanding students and strive to provide the students with the educational experience they need. These students want and deserve to have all the experiences students in a “normal” public school would be having. For example, last week, students were rewarded for collecting pop tabs to raise money for Ronald McDonald House in Cleveland with a visit from the clown himself and a pizza party. Students were active, engaged, and thrilled to watch and participate in his magic show.

On Wednesday, five students graduated from Happy Hearts, and each student is unique in his or her own way. Guest speaker Jean White talked about her daughter, Jalisa, one of the graduates, and how the family had been told when Jalisa was born they were unsure what her mental capacity would eventually be. At graduation, Jalisa sang “Wind Beneath My Wings” to her fellow graduates — Marvin D. Byler, Alice M. Dalrymple, Brandon T. Lee, and Andres A. Walsh.

Each student had their own story, from Special Olympics success, to being crowned prom king to belting out tunes in church. But each student is able to make a contribution to the community, and Happy Hearts has helped make that happen for them and their family.

Happy Hearts provides services for students aged 6 to 21 who have been referred by local school districts across the county. According to the Ashtabula County Board of Developmental Disabilities, they focus on academics as well as “functional life skills and vocational skills.” Each student has an individualized plan designed and written with the student’s parents with the goal to meet each individual student’s needs. Classrooms at Happy Hearts have students developing traditionally because their interaction can help bring out socialization in the students with disabilities.

We are glad Happy Hearts is a part of our community here in Ashtabula County and is providing much needed services to some truly remarkable young men and women.

2016

### **Happy Hearts Receives a New Industrial Dishwasher**

February 21, 2016

Happy Hearts School will receive a Department of Education grant for a new industrial dishwasher costing about \$3,700 to replace one that is over twenty years old. “It is obsolete. We were unable to get parts for it anymore,” Susan Holloman, Happy Hearts Food Service Coordinator said. She added that the dishwasher has been a kitchen problem for at least five years. “We’ve just been kind of making this one work.”

This is the first time that Happy Hearts received the Department of Education Grant and the school was chosen out of 150 school lunch program applications submitted to the Department’s office for Children Nutrition. Schools that have few options for equipment funding are located in underserved areas, or have older equipment received funding priority.

Industrial dishwashers can cost anywhere from \$4,000 to \$5,000 for high end models. Happy Hearts chose the same, entry-level model as a replacement which is expected to cost about \$3,700, including delivery, installation, and removal of the old unit. Since the school’s adult employees are the ones doing the dishes, Susan wanted a model they were comfortable operating.

### **Rena M. Hudson Graduated from Happy Hearts and Worked at Ash/Craft for Forty Years. Dies**

February 28, 2016



Rena M. Hudson, one of Happy Heart’s original pupils and a forty-year employee of Ash/Craft Industries died on Sunday, February 21, 2016.

Born October 22, 1943, in Pierpont, the daughter of Myron W. and Elsie Hackathorne Hudson, Rena always proudly pointed out that she was born on her mother’s 22nd birthday. She attended Pierpont School and was one of the first students at Happy Hearts in the class of Miss Barbara White.

After her graduation from Happy Hearts, Rena went to work at Ash/Craft in its



early days and she did such a good job that she was named Employee of the Year. She loved going to Ash/Craft, seeing her friends, supervisors, bus driver aides, and everybody that worked there. She never considered retirement as an option.

As well as watching *Lawrence Welk*, *Jeopardy*, *Wheel of Fortune*, and *Leave it to Beaver* on television, Rena enjoyed camping with her parents and going on bus trips with her sister Sue, Cleveland Indians games and other sports activities. Rena loved people and they loved her. Her family said that could not go anywhere with her without someone stopping to talk to her. “Rena never met a stranger.”

2017

### **Andrew Misiak Named President of the County Developmental Disabilities Board**

Feb 5, 2017

After spending close to two years on the Ashtabula County Board of Developmental Disabilities, Andrew Misiak, 30, has been named its president. The Board oversees Happy Hearts School and Ash/Craft Industries as well as other programs.



A criminal justice graduate from Bowling Green University, he is a LEADERship Ashtabula County member and is entering his third year as the Ashtabula County Juvenile Court administrator. He previously spent nearly seven years working in the Ashtabula Municipal Court. He told the Ashtabula Star Beacon that he has always been eager to work with developmentally disabled people.

Board Vice President Brett Horvath nominated Andrew for the presidency and the Board voted unanimously to elect him at its meeting last month. “I think Andrew will make a fine president. He is new but he works with young people all the time He is really dedicated to his task and I just want to say he is energized. There is a lot of work involved that is beyond our board meetings,” he added. “Someone who’s willing to work and work hard and work cooperatively — you can’t ask for much more than that.”

Andrew said his new role would coincide with his juvenile court administrator job, especially in the programming area, which is the most interesting to him. He said

the Board's current objective is navigating through sweeping federal and state changes to all county DD boards involving direct care, segregated sheltered workshops and the phasing out of federal waivers which may force them to privatize or cut back services. "I am excited for the opportunity and really just putting individuals that we serve at the top of the organization. They are our number one priority," he said.

### **Ash/Craft Industries May Become Private Nonprofit Organization**

March 10, 2017

A Jefferson Gazette story by Gabriel McVey dated March 10, 2017, stated that during its February 28th meeting, the Ashtabula County Board of Commissioners learned that the Ashtabula County Board of Developmental Disabilities faces serious challenges because of recent federal regulatory changes by the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) and Ash/Craft Industries may have to privatize. Recent changes to CMS regulations have meant disabled people can't receive services directly from boards of DD. The Ashtabula County Board of DD oversees Ash/Craft as well as Happy Hearts School and Ash /Craft staff are currently Board employees.

Medicaid waiver programs help provide services to people who otherwise would be in an institution, nursing home, or hospital to receive long-term care in the community. Until 1991, the federal Medicaid program only paid for services of people living in institutions. The approval of federal Medicaid waiver programs allowed states to provide services to consumers in their homes and in their communities, CMS stated. Ash/Craft Industries operates a greenhouse, garden shop, and woodworking workshop as well as providing supervised community employment services for disabled people.

According to Ash/Craft Director Lynda Perry, CMS has said that by 2024 county boards of Developmental Disabilities cannot provide direct services to anyone on waivers. We are supposed to be making plans to work with private providers. She said the proposed move to make Ash/Craft a private, nonprofit service provider would not affect Happy Hearts School, which is a separate from Ash/Craft also operated by the Board of DD.

Another recent change to CMS regulations that creates problems for Ash/Craft stems from the 2013 Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) which

prohibits Ash/Craft from paying workers between 18 and 26 for piece work. “Under WIOA people under age 26 can’t be paid less than minimum wage,” Lynda said.

Disabled people between 18 and 26 are supposed to find work with private employers in the community, regardless of their functional level. These people have to spend eight years with vocational rehabilitation services unsuccessfully seeking work before they can apply for services through Ash/Craft, according to Director Perry.

Director Perry added that the Ash/Craft spin-off from the DD Board is currently on hold because the Workshop is waiting for further instructions from CMS. The original deadline that CMS set to shift Board of DD clients to private providers was 2017, but CMS extended it to 2024. “We were really aggressively moving ahead on this and then they moved the deadline, so we put the brakes on,” Lynda said.

Making a crucial point for the Ashtabula County Board of DD, Director Perry said that whether or not Ash/Craft remains under the Board of DD or becomes a private service provider, the Ashtabula County Board of DD will still be responsible for 40 percent of service expense for people under its care. “Explaining this to the community will be very important. We will still need a levy to pay that 40 percent,” she said.

According to the Ashtabula County DD Board Fiscal Director Lori Burdick, the Board is currently funded by a 1.3 mill levy first passed in 2003 and most recently renewed in 2016. The Board of DD general fund budget for 2016 was 13.3 million dollars.

### **Critical Ashtabula County DD Board Levy Fails**

November 9, 2017

Ashtabula County voters declined to pass the Ashtabula County Board of Developmental Disabilities proposed .67 mill increased to its operating levy, which would have bumped it to two mills. The measure failed with 10,616 no votes to 9,466 yes votes or 53 to 47 percent, according to unofficial county Board of Election results.

DD Board President Andrew Misiak said that the Ashtabula County levy was the only one that failed out of thirteen DD levies across Ohio, even some requesting

larger increases. “Right now, we are just trying to swallow this pill. We are really just looking through all our programs, not looking to cut anything, yet just kind of looking at possible funding options for next year,” he said.

Board Superintendent Anne Zeitler thanked the people who helped with the Board’s levy campaign, and the voters who supported it, noting that the levy proposal faced heavy opposition across precincts in Geneva, and Geneva on the Lake as well as Geneva, Harpersfield, and Austinburg Townships. She said she suspected the DD levy was a casualty of a “no new tax” climate. “We will continue to analyze, look forward, review our options, and work on this together,” she said, adding that the Board was relying on the levy to stave off cuts as there were few funding avenues available outside a larger operating levy. “Right now, we’ve accessed just about everything that’s available to us,” she said.

The Ashtabula County Developmental Disabilities Board, which operates Happy Hearts School and Ash/Craft Industries, has been spending at a deficit since 2008 and projected that it will run out of money next year. Since 2004, the Board has eliminated forty-nine positions through attrition and changed salary and benefit schedules for new hires, saving about 26.2 million dollars. It is also replacing its bus fleet with more fuel-economic vans.

### **Happy Hearts Plans to Shut Its Doors in June December 15, 2017**

Sixty-three years after its opening at the Elm Avenue Methodist Church in Ashtabula, Happy Hearts School, snuggled in its Kingsville building since 1968, is closing next year.

The Ashtabula County Board of Developmental Disabilities members said they have been looking for a way to keep the school open, but after last month’s levy failed by a 53-47 percent margin and an unsuccessful union negotiation, they had to close the school.

In November, the board had sought to increase one of its two 1.33-mill levies to two mills, which would have generated an additional \$2 million per year, on top of the \$6 million it currently receives each year in property tax revenue. The board has been spending at a deficit since 2008 and had a cash balance to start this year of only about \$6,000. Since 2004, the Board has eliminated forty-nine positions through attrition, and changed salary and benefit schedules for new hires, saving

twenty-six million dollars. The Board also worked with labor unions to freeze the Cost-of-Living wage and lower health insurance premiums for all employees, but Board Superintendent Anne Zeitler said that a deal couldn't be reached with both unions on the insurance plan, which would have saved one million dollars and bought the school another year.

According to Board members, annual losses of state and federal revenues and reimbursements totaling about 2.3 million dollars and rising costs for Medicaid Waivers and transportation made the November levy essential to avoid cutting services. They never specifically said Happy Hearts would close if the levy failed.

The Developmental Disabilities board met Thursday evening to discuss their options, and after meeting in a closed-door executive session, members decided to close the school. "If the levy would have passed, we would have had enough money to keep Happy Hearts open another year," DD Board President Andrew Misiak said. He held out little hope for the possibility for future levy rescues, saying that even if the DD Board brought another levy before voters next year it would not be enough. "If we passed a levy in 2018, we still would have needed three million dollars to carry us over until the levy money was available in March of 2019. We just did not have it," he said. He added that there is a remote possibility a levy still could go on the November ballot, but there was no way the levy could have gone on the earlier May ballot because the window of opportunity had closed.

President Misiak said, "We looked at every available option, but sadly, Happy Hearts as we know it is no more." He added that Happy Hearts will close at the end of the school year in June, and all 35 Happy Hearts students will attend schools or satellite programs in the districts where they live. He said about thirty-three teachers and other staff would be laid off at the end of the school year in June and they would be receiving their layoff notices in January. An unknown number of physical therapists, LPNs, and nurse assistants will also be laid off. The Board has not finalized the fate of Ash/Craft Industries, but it will likely be privatized sometime in the future. It also hopes to sell its Geneva building and use the DD Board building on Route 84.

About thirty parents, staff members, and teachers attended the meeting. No fiery protests ignited the room, just somber resignation.

## **Officials Weigh Future After Happy Hearts Closes**

Dec 17, 2017

People in Ashtabula County were shocked and saddened when the Ashtabula County Board of Developmental Disabilities announced the closing of Happy Hearts School this week, but there may be an option.

John Rubesich, Ashtabula County Educational Service Center Superintendent, said he wanted to assure parents of students who attend Happy Hearts that their children will be served. He has planned meetings with the DD Board and hopes to continue the Happy Hearts services and programs through the Educational Service Center. “We run many special needs programs throughout the county...that is what we do. We as an agency are a shared service provider for all of our school districts,” he said. He suggested that one possible option would be having the Educational Service Center take over Happy Hearts, but still work with the DD Board.

DD Board President Andrew Misiak said the Board is looking at all possible avenues, but if Happy Hearts endures in some form, it will be a different setup and the Board will no longer directly run it. “We are still exploring all of those avenues,” Misiak said, adding, “There is going to be some new beginnings. Every new beginning comes from another beginning’s end. We are still in the business of providing services for those DD clients.”

Finding a way to provide services in a centralized location is important, Rubesich said, because if the students at Happy Hearts and its satellite locations have to return to their home districts then cash-strapped schools will need to hire their own nurses, therapists, and paraprofessionals rather than having a centralized and mainstreamed system that gets “the biggest bang for your buck.”

According to the DD Board, Happy Hearts receives about 2.9 million dollars, not including transportation costs, of the six million dollars in property tax revenue that the DD Board’s levies generate. All money is deposited into the Board’s general fund to cover all services provided, which in addition to Happy Hearts includes early intervention; adult services/Medicaid wavier match; community support services; transportation; investigative support services; and administration. Transportation becomes a big expense because the DD Board, not the home school districts, is responsible for transporting all the students to the satellite sites and the Kingsville building, President Misiak said.

The public had some questions about collecting property tax money in the future, as past levies specifically referenced Happy Hearts and Ash/Craft which is likely going to be privatized in the near future. All levy funding goes into the general fund and closing Happy Hearts would not affect the collection.

In addition, Rubesich said the Ohio Department of Education provides \$1 million in direct funding earmarked for Happy Hearts and that is a revenue source for students he does not want the county to lose. “Are we in a position to say we do not need that money from the state? I do not think so,” he said.

Happy Hearts currently serves a total of seventy-nine children, including thirty-four at satellite sites the DD Board funds at Geneva, Ashtabula, Grand Valley and Pymatuning Valley, and forty-five physically on site at the Kingsville building.

2018

### **Educational Service Center, Developmental Disabilities Board Still Ironing Out Details of Happy Hearts Changeover**

May 15, 2018

The Ashtabula County Educational Service Center plans to move its offices and potentially Happy Hearts to the former Thomas Jefferson Elementary School, Superintendent John Rubesich said. In April, the Educational Service Center (ESC) bought Thomas Jefferson Elementary School, located at 2630 West 13th Street, from the Ashtabula Area City School District for \$500,000. It will move its offices there from the former State Road Elementary School.

Since the beginning of the year, the ESC has also been working to take over and save Happy Hearts from closing. In late January, the Board of DD passed a funding agreement for the upcoming school year, involving the county-owned Happy Hearts School in Kingsville, its preschool services and its six satellite classrooms around the county as well as its staff, who will become center employees, receiving ESC salaries and benefits. The board also will pass its \$1.2 million subsidy from the state Department of Education to the ESC. “When we signed it, we thought services would continue at the (current) Happy Hearts School,” said Anne Zeitler, DD Board superintendent. “Then again, that’s up to the ESC. We are working with the ESC to provide a smooth transition.”

There are still some issues that need to be settled with the Board of DD and the county commissioners. It is still unclear how the owner-operator relationship

between the county and the center would work, Rubesich said, declining to elaborate.

County Commissioner J.P. Ducro IV said the commissioners are working with both parties to sit down with a mediator. “We know it is important to get this done in a timely fashion,” he said.

## **Happy Hearts Last Graduations in the 1955 Era Happy Hearts School**

May 18, 2018



*Alexis Brown, 2018 Happy Hearts graduate, is all smiles. Ashtabula Star Beacon photos by Warren Dillaway.*



*Jacob Jones, Class speaker, announced each graduate’s family so they could stand and honor their graduate. Six Happy Hearts Graduates Start the Next Chapter of Their Lives*

“Today is your day and your mountain is awaiting you.” —  
Aaxis Marie Brown; Kristen Nicole Fink; Jasmine Haley-Marie Hillyer; Jacob Anthony Jones; Nicole Adeline Madden; and Chelsie L. Otto eagerly marched into the Happy Hearts School gymnasium to claim their diplomas at the May 18, 2018, Happy Hearts graduation.



Happy Hearts School Principal Patrick Guliano greeted family and friends attending the ceremony. He thanked staff from the school and Ashcraft Industries for their support, saying students and staff have bonded over the school year. “It is a family affair,” he said. Class Speaker Jacob Jones announced each family that they could stand to honor their graduate.

Carol Mentges, a therapist at Happy Hearts who has worked with disabled children for 50 years, was the graduation speaker. Building her speech around the Dr. Seuss book, “Oh, The Places You’ll Go,” she challenged students to reach for their full potential and encouraged them to explore as many places they could reach in their lives.

### **Eleven Students Graduate from Happy Hearts Pre-School May 25, 2018**

*Ed Dick (left) and Quinn Novak process on Thursday afternoon during their Happy Hearts Preschool graduation at the school on May 25, 2018. Ashtabula Star Beacon photo by Warren Dillaway.*



More than one hundred people celebrated the Happy Hearts Pre-School graduation on Thursday afternoon in the school’s .gymnasium.

Happy Hearts Principal Patrick Guliano welcomed the families and friends of the graduates to the “large class” of eleven graduates.

The students marched into the gym to the tune of “Pomp and Circumstance,” with aides assisting some of them while others walked down the aisle by themselves. They walked to their seats, each with their name on the back, and some happily waved and smiled at their families. During the short ceremony, teachers presented diplomas to their students, and then everyone enjoyed the cookies, cake, and other snacks on nearby tables.

This graduation could be the last one at the school, because negotiations between the Ashtabula County Developmental Disabilities Board and the Ashtabula County Education Service Center about the fate of the school are still ongoing, according to Andrew Misiak, DD Board President

## Time line 2011-2018

2011

March 5, 2011. Richard Flower was honored at the Ashtabula County Branch of the American Red Cross Hero's Breakfast for his part in establishing Special Olympics and his role in creating the Special Olympics Park between Happy Hearts School and Ash/Craft Industries.

March 31, 2011. A video about Happy Hearts and Ash/Craft that the Ashtabula County Board of Developmental Disabilities and Mental Retardation and Media Magic of New Lyme Township produced won a state award. Titled "Abilities in Motion," the video won the Ohio Public Images Award of Excellence for 2011.

April 1, 2011. Ash/Craft Industries added a shredding service, charging thirty-five cents per pound for documents shredded.

Saturday, April 2, 2011. Kathryn Hart, one of the original students at Happy Hearts School died. She continued to work at Ash/Craft until she became ill in November 2010.

May 29, 2011. The Concerned Motorcyclists of Ohio Region 13 Special Olympics Race began at Lake Shore Park in Ashtabula Township.

November 2011. Ashtabula County citizens voted to renew a one-half mill levy for Happy Hearts School and Ash/Craft Industries.

2012

March 15, 2012. Larry Moroski, one of the original Happy Hearts students, dies.  
June 10, 2012.

Mary Lou Moody retired as a bus driver and transportation Director for the Ashtabula County Board of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities after 38 years of service.

2013

March 7, 2013. Open House at Happy Hearts School.

March 4-8, 2013, is Shred Week at Ash/Craft Industries.

March 2013 is Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month.

2014

John Pickett, early Happy Hearts Graduate, Friendship Class, and Amazing Smiler dies on March 13, 2014.

March 30, 2014. Helping Hands Members Rise \$8,000 for Special Olympics

December 29, 2014. Sheltered Workshops Face an Uncertain Future: Change with CMS Waivers concerns Ash/Craft

2015

January 25, 2015. Ash/Craft Industries begins a paper shredding service.

March 2015. Despite federal and state law changes that put county involvement in employment services for developmentally disabled people at risk, Ashtabula County Commissioners pledged support for the county Board of Developmental Disabilities at a meeting at Happy Hearts School. The resolution will not change the state rulings, but it is a signal of support for the Ashtabula County Board of Developmental Disabilities.

2016

February 2016. Happy Hearts School receives a grant for a new industrial dishwasher.

February 28, 2016. Rena M. Hudson, Happy Hearts Graduate and 40-Year Ash/Craft Employee Dies.

November. Voters renew 1.3 mill levy.

2017

February. Andrew Misiak is named new president of the Ashtabula County Board of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities.

November. Critical funding levy for Happy Hearts fails. The Ashtabula County Board of Developmental Disabilities announces plans to close Happy Hearts School or hand it over to another agency.

2018

May 18, 2018. Happy Hearts graduates six students in its last graduation in the 1955 era school.

May 25, 2016. Happy Hearts School graduates eleven pre-school students in its last pre-school graduation in the 1955 era school.

Happy Hearts School closes. Thirty-five Happy Hearts students will attend schools or satellite programs in the districts where they live when the fall semester begins.

## Blue Notes

### A Few Hours Of... Free Time

#### Winter 1995, New Directions

by Patty Davis, Transportation Department

The question is what do school bus staff do with our time in between the morning and afternoon runs? It's one of the greatest questions of western civilization.

Although most of us fill our days with pre-planned things to do that need to be done, we also gather once a month as a group to work on crafts. We have very talented people in our transportation unit and we also have a lot of fun.

Someone will come up with idea, usually seasonal, and that makes it interesting.

For example, in the springtime we usually will work outdoors in Kingsville Park.

We like to work together in the outdoors as long as we can. This past summer we worked on lawn chairs. We had many different patterns to choose from and we restrung with colorful cords and beautiful artwork on the chairs and lawn furniture.

During the fall of the year we made door decorations. During the holidays we had fun making our Santas and Christmas trees and lighted holiday pine baskets decorated with pine cones and Christmas lights.

When the weather is not working in our favor, it does not stop this group. We gather in different homes. One thing is always certain. We always have a fun time.

## Chapter Eight: Graduations: Enabled Instead of Disabled!



*(Left to right) Alice Marie Dalrymple, Jalisa Le Anna White, and Andres Walsh are three members of the five-person Happy Hearts graduating class of 2015. Ashtabula Star Beacon Photo by Shelley Terry.*

Parents and graduates of the Happy Hearts School program feel as much joy, pride, and sense of achievement as graduates from public schools, perhaps more because they had to overcome many physical and mental obstacles to complete the curriculum consisting of academic and life skills. Each Happy Hearts student had an Individualized Education Plan or “life plan” to complete.

Instead of grades, their team usually made up of family, friends, and teachers, who measured their progress and decided when the student was ready to move to the next level. The cut off age for students to stay in the program was twenty-two, but some students graduated earlier. Each graduation featured music, gifts, speeches, and awarding of diplomas, with graduates visibly proud of their accomplishments. Students had successfully completed the Happy Hearts and Ash/Craft programs since their beginnings in the 1950s, but the first ceremonial commencements, complete with Pomp and Circumstance and processions and recessions down the aisle, became part of the Happy Hearts tradition in the 1980s.

Happy Hearts Commencement, 1981

1981 graduates. Timothy Allen Bates; Sharen Marie Blake; Tamela Jo Hayes; Brian Christopher Lockett; Michael Edward Meredyk; Janice Kay Searcy; Joanna Marie Stawicki; Ray Kelvin Wortman.

Invocation, Father Daniel Kulesa; Guest Speaker, Peter P. Polloni, Deputy Commissioner, ODMR/DD; Student Speaker, Joanna Stawicki.



*Graduates of Happy Hearts School in Kingsville preparing for Wednesday's processional (left to right) are Renee Jenner, Lela Holcomb, James Andrego, and Brian Flaughter. Other graduates include Margaret Hannold, Needham Jacobs Jr., Robert Ludwick Jr., Kerry Markin and Melonie Weir. June 2, 1982. Photograph by Vern Fuchs.*

### **Happy Hearts Commencement, June 2, 1982**

June 2, 1982.

The 1982 graduates were Renee Jenner; Lela Holcomb; James Andrego; Brian Flaughter; Margaret Hannold; Needham Jacobs Jr; Robert Ludwick Jr; Kerry Markin; and Melonie Weir.

Guest Speaker was Sue Mickle, Superintendent, Ashtabula County Joint Vocational School.

### **Happy Hearts Commencement, June 2, 1983.**

The 1983 Happy Hearts graduation took place, with five students walking down the aisle. Graduating were Becky Ann Crate; Aaron Michael Crow; Tina Marie Eaton; Daniel Scott Mast; and Timothy John Perkins.

Music teacher Mike DeMarino played the organ for the ceremonies. Mary Ellen Higley, chairwoman of the Ashtabula County Board of Developmental Disabilities and Mental Retardation, and James A. Giannell, principal of Happy Hearts conferred certificates. Mike DeMarino closed the program by playing "For All We Know."

### **1984 Graduation**

A letter from the files of school Principal James Giannell dated June 1, 1984, announced a Happy Hearts graduation on June 7, 1984, at school. Guest speaker

was Reverend William Offutt, minister from the First Baptist Church in Jefferson and chairperson of the Ash/Craft Board.

### **1985 Graduation**

A letter from the files of school Principal James Giannell dated June 3, 1985,



announced that Happy Hearts would hold commencement exercises for graduates on Wednesday June 5, 1985, at 7 p.m. at the school. Guest speaker was Jeanne Bento, Ashtabula County Commissioner, and a parent from the program.

*June 15, 1985. Apple Orchard Dedicated. Jim and Mary Ellen Blake of Ashtabula dedicate an apple orchard at Happy Hearts School to the memory of their daughter, Sharon Blake. A 1981 graduate of Happy Hearts School and Ashcraft Industries*

*client. Miss Blake died February 1984 at the age of twenty-two. The orchard was made possible through memorial gifts from family and friends. Ashtabula Star Beacon photo by Carl E. Feather.*



### **1986 Graduation**

There are no records for 1986.

### **Happy Hearts Commencement, June 3, 1987**

*Graduating Class. June 3, 1987. Happy Hearts School Superintendent Richard Cozza, Jr. opened the 1987 graduation ceremonies held Tuesday at Happy Heart School. Graduates from left include Christine Audrey Thomas; Diane Elizabeth Stowe; Christopher Douglas Rayburn; Brian Edward Miller; Michelle Irene*

*Kuscsik; Judith Ann Kohowski; Melissa Ann Feke; and Kimberly Myrene Drozd. Not pictured is Lisa Ann Coffman, who also graduated. Photo by Beth Brody.*

## **1988 Graduation**

There are no records for 1988.

## **Happy Hearts Commencement, May 25, 1989**

The 1989 graduates were Carl James Arnold; Glenna Gaye Elkins; Ralph J. Hammond; John James Hurley; Gerald Robert Kangas; Salvatore Sebastian Montagno; Tamara Lawanda Shaw; and Steve Matthew Simko.

The graduates processed into the gymnasium to the tune of Pomp and Circumstance, played by Michael DeMarino. Richard J. Cozza, Jr., Superintendent, introduced the guests and Reverend Ronald Nuzzi of St. John High School gave the invocation. St. Joseph Contemporary Choir sang and Happy Hearts Principal Cynthia M. Phillips presented the class of 1989.

Class speakers were John Hurley and Gerald Kangas, and Ms. Barb Turchetta gave the commencement address. Dr. E. James, Chairman of the Ashtabula County Board of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities, and Principal Phillips conferred the diplomas.

### **Graduation Speech by John Hurley**

Our years at Happy Hearts have been years of learning, doing many different kinds of jobs, preparing food, and working in an office, learning to be more responsible for ourselves. We have learned that we can all be leaders in some way. Most of all, we have learned how to talk to people and to feel that we are never alone. We want to thank our families and teachers for all they have taught us. Special thanks to the cooks for all the help they have given us this past year.

### **Graduation Speech by Gerald Kangas**

During our years at Happy Hearts, we have grown from youngsters to adults. When we came here many of us could not do much for ourselves. Now that we are graduating we can make some decisions on our own. I hope someday we will all be responsible enough to hold jobs in our community. Special thanks to our teachers at Happy Hearts and to all the people at the County Home and Brown Memorial Hospital for the example and help they have given us. I also want to thank Tony Masters for all that he has taught me this past year.



### **Happy Hearts Commencement, May 30, 1990**

1990 graduates were: Curtis Alvin Lee, Sheila Ann Salvato, Dick James West, Jr. Entertainment for the graduation reception was provided by the Fairport Polkateers. Mike DeMarino was the organist for the program. Mr. Richard J. Cozza, Jr., Superintendent welcomed and introduced the guests. Guest Speaker was Mrs. Pat Salvato, mother of graduate Sheila Salvato. Mrs. Biddiana Kohowski, Chairman of ACBMRDD and Mrs. Mary Ellen Higley, Principal of Happy Hearts School, conferred the diplomas. Mrs. Lois Watson was the vocalist, accompanied by Mike DeMarino. Mrs. Mary Ellen Higley presented the class of 1990.

### **Happy Hearts Commencement, May 24, 1991**

1991 graduates were: Walter Kightlinger, Arnold McKeown, Ray Richmond, Samuel Riggs, and Michael Zajac. Michael Zajac was the class speaker.

Mike Zajac's speech: Thank you all for coming to our graduation ceremony. I was chosen to speak on behalf of my fellow graduates: Walter Kightlinger, Sam Riggs, Ray Richmond, Arnie McKeown and myself, Mike Zajac. We would like to thank all of the staff at Happy Hearts School for all their help and caring that brought us to this day. We would also like to thank our families and friends for all their support. We are sad to leave, but excited about what we will be doing in the future. Do not forget us, because we will not ever forget you.

Thomas Gwilt, Chairman of ACBMRDD and Mrs. Mary Ellen Higley, principal of Happy Hearts School, conferred the diplomas. Reverend John Mulqueen, Mother of Sorrows Church, delivered the invocation and Mrs. Mary Ellen Higley presented the class of 1991.

### **Happy Hearts Commencement, May 29, 1992**

1992 Graduates: Gary D. Adams; Susan F. Bonds; Randy L. Cutright; James V. McCune; Daniel E. Payne; Jane M. Phipps; and Todd J. Sloan.

Class Speaker: Gary Adams

Thank you for coming to our graduation ceremony. I was chosen to speak on behalf of my fellow graduates: Susan Bonds, Randy Cutright, Jim McCune, Dan Payne, Jane Phipps, Todd Sloan and myself, Gary Adams.

We would like to thank the staff at Happy Hearts' School for all their help and caring that brought us to this day. We would also like to thank our families and friends for all their support.

We are sad to leave, but excited about what we will be doing in the future. Do not

forget us, because we will not ever forget you.

### **Happy Hearts Commencement, 1993**

1993 Graduates: Andrew W. Fields; Sandra L. Larko; Mindy L. Martinez; Ivan L. McCumber; Angela M. Milbrandt; Christina A. Pearson; Jennifer A. Richardson; Jeffrey E. Skivolocke; Robert F. Stewart, Jr.; David R. Szalai.

Graduation speaker, 1993 - Andrew Fields

Good evening everyone. My name is Andrew Fields. On behalf of my fellow graduating students, Sandy Larko, Mindy Martinez, Ivan McCumber, Angela Milbrandt, Christina Pearson, Jennifer Richardson, Jeffrey Skivolocke, Robert Stewart, and David Szalai, I welcome you to the 1993 Happy Hearts School graduating ceremony.

Speaking for the entire graduating class, I would like first to thank our families and friends for the care and support given us through the years. Second, we would like to thank the staff here at school to whom we owe so much for helping to make this evening possible.

We feel a little sad knowing that we are leaving our school and many of our friends. But that sadness is softened when we think of the exciting possibilities the future offers us.

Please keep each of us in your thoughts and remember that we are only beginning a different, exciting existence with new and challenging opportunities. We will always have affectionate memories for all of you.

Thank you.

### **Happy Hearts Commencement, May 27, 1994**

1994 Graduates: Jennifer Aldrich; Joel Eaton; Randy Fails; Casey Vaughan; Jacob Zelczer.

Richard Cozza Jr. welcomed everyone and introduced the guests and Joe Cook extended the community welcome.

Class Speaker Jacob Zelczer thanked everyone for coming to celebrate their

graduation with them. He concluded by saying, "Thank you, parents, staff, and friends for many great years here at Happy Hearts School. We are sad to leave, but ready to move into our future."

Thomas Gwilt, Chairman of the Ashtabula County Board of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities, and Dr. Mary Ellen Higley, Principal of Happy Hearts School, conferred the Diplomas.

Will Venable sang for the graduation ceremonies accompanied by Joanne Baruffa. The songs they performed included "You'll Never Walk Alone" by Rodgers and Hammerstein, "Without a Song" by Youmans, Rose and Eliscu, and "Look to the Rainbow," by Lane and Harburg.

Congressman Eric D. Fingerhut was guest speaker and Dr. Higley presented the Class of 1994. Don Cosner bestowed the Ashtabula County Council for Retarded Citizens gifts.

Everyone sang the "Happy Hearts School Alma Mater," the new graduates marched out in a recessional, and the graduates and their friends and families enjoyed a reception in the school cafeteria.

Premix Inc. of North Kingsville awarded certificates of appreciation to Ash/Craft Industries workers Larry Coleman, Lela Holcomb, supervisor Cheryl Marshall, Jean Litchfield, and Sherry Baumgardner. They were recognized for outstanding cleaning services they provided Premix during 1992-1994.

### **Happy Hearts Commencement, 1995**

Dr. Mary Ellen Higley presented the class of 1995.

1995 graduates: Christina Cross; Michael Emory; Rebecca Fortier; Robert Greer; William Griswold; Craig Plats; Jeff Schultz.

Organist for program, Michael DeMarino. Speakers: Mike Emory and Jeff Schultz.

Good Evening,

My name is Jeff Schultz. I wish to welcome all of you to our graduation. I have been a student at Happy Hearts for 12 years and wish to thank all the teachers and aides for the help I have received here.

I came here with behavior problems and have been able to work through them with help from the staff. I am now ready to go out into the community, find a job and get on with my life. This would not have been possible without this school and the

people who really care about me.

I will miss this school. This will be an adjustment for me, too, but I believe I have found the way to cope with this and be successful outside.

I have also been able to grow through the Special Olympics Program. I have found friendship, understanding, skills and how to work as a team through them and the sports program they offer. Special Olympics will not stop for me when school does. I will have the fun and activities of Special Olympics for the rest of my life and I am grateful for that. Our coaches are our friends. I wish good luck to my classmates and goodbye to all my friends here at school.

Mike Emory. Good evening and thank you for coming. Many people feel graduation is an ending and a time to be sad. But I would like to have you think of our graduation as a happy beginning. Each of us who is leaving school for the final time tonight has begun a new part of his or her life. One that offers us many exciting opportunities and challenges. There is a time to be grateful.

There is a little sadness at leaving old friends and the school we have known for so long, but much happiness as we begin to make new friends and take on new obligations. This is a time to be happy for everyone.

On behalf of my fellow graduates, I would like to thank the staff at school and especially our families who have loved us and taken care of us for so many years. We will make you proud.

Jean Fields, Chairman of ACBMR/DD, and Dr. Mary Ellen Higley, principal of Happy Hearts School conferred the diplomas.

### **Happy Hearts Commencement, May 23, 1996**

Graduates: Antonio Butler; Victoria Hippely; Ricarda (Nicie) Reynolds; Rose Marie Perry; and Fred Neville.

### **Happy Hearts Commencement, May 23, 1997**

Graduates: Mary Almasy and Luis Perez.

Luis Perez 's speech. Good afternoon everyone and welcome to the 1997 Happy Hearts School graduation. This day marks the close of Mary's and my days at this school. It is a day filled with both happiness and sadness. It is sad because today we close the door on part of our lives. It is happy because today we also are opening the door to our future.

Over the years many of you, here today, have touched our lives. Your touch did last, not only for that moment in time, but is also felt today. In fact, it is because of you parents, teachers, and assistants that Mary and I are who we are today. For your lifetime touches, Mary and I say thank you and God Bless each and every one of you.

### **1998 Happy Hearts Commencement**

Graduates were Kathryn Fisher; William E. Jenner; Amy Elizabeth Maddox; Horace “Dale” Moore, Jr.; Daniel E. Payne; Carrie Ann Stowe; and Ronald D. Turner, Jr.

### **Happy Hearts Commencement, June 2, 1999**

The graduating class of 1999 was Diane Barker; Marlon Burton; Jenny Drew; Adam Hughey; Dan Hunt; Trevor Lundgren; Robin Rich; Charlie Smith; and Lewis Thompson. Gene Moroski provided the music.

After the 1999 graduating class processed into the cafeteria, Larry Korland, Acting Superintendent, welcomed and introduced the guests.

Dan Hunt, Class speaker, said:

Good Evening and Welcome to the 1999 Happy Hearts School graduation. Today is our special day. It is because of you we have reached this milestone in our lives. Thank you and God Bless you.

The future belongs to us!

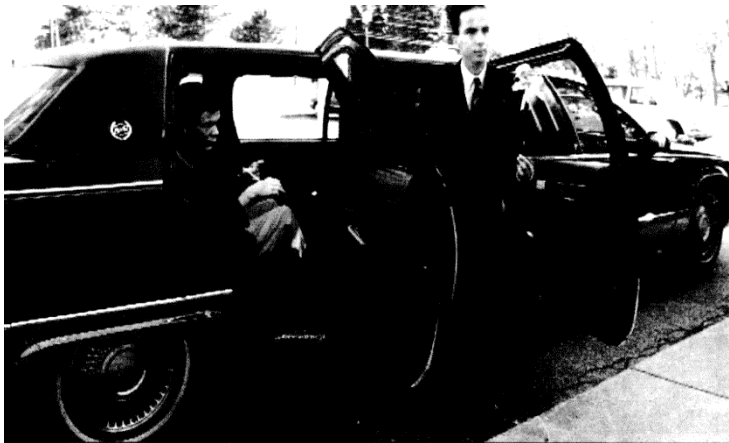
Ron Tate, President of the Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities Board and Ms. Anne Zeitler, Director of Educational Services, conferred the diplomas. John and Kelly Mucci provided the music and Jeanne Bento was the guest speaker. Larry Korland, Acting Superintendent presented the class of 1999.

## Happy Hearts Commencement, June 6, 2000



*Rob DeCaro (left) congratulates David Baker after receiving his diploma at his Happy Hearts graduation. Ashtabula Star Beacon photo by Martin S. Lerman.*

*Kevin Ecklund (left) waits in line as Rob DeCaro gets out as they arrive at Happy Hearts School for graduation.*



### Two Thousand Graduates

David M. Baker;  
Christopher Robert William  
DeCaro; Kevin Andrew  
Ecklund;  
James H. Michael Taylor.

### James H. Michael Taylor's Speech

Hello Everyone,  
Today is a special day for David Baker, Rob DeCaro, Kevin Ecklund and me, Michael Taylor. We are happy to see all of you tonight. Thank you.

### David M. Baker's Speech

Good Evening:

I am very happy you are here for graduation today. I want to thank all my teachers, teacher assistants, bus drivers, friends, and family for helping me to learn. I will try to be a good worker and make you proud of me. Good luck to my friends, Mike, Rob, and Kevin. I will miss you!

Thank you.

Christopher Robert William DeCaro's Speech  
Good Evening:

I came to Happy Hearts School 21 years ago when I was just a baby. I did not talk. I could not walk. I could not read or write, and I did not have many friends. I did not know many things. I met many people who were very nice to me. I did not know that they were called teachers.

It was very hard work for me to learn, and for my teachers to teach me what I had to know. All of us came to school every day. I found out that learning new things was fun. I will remember all the important things my teachers taught me, and I will use them the rest of my life.

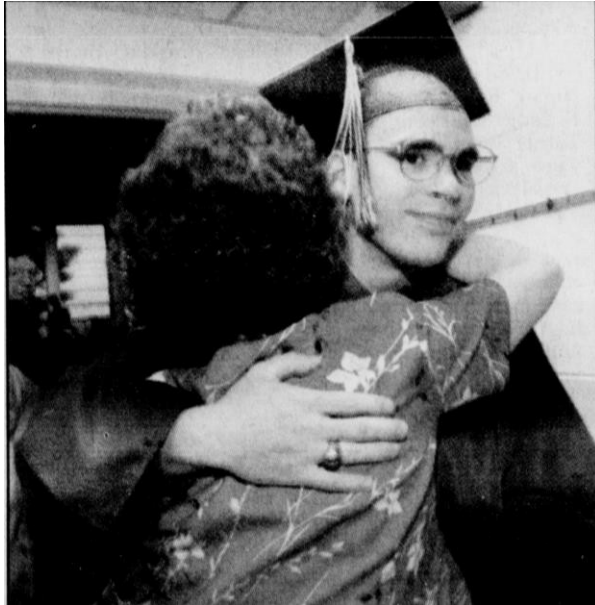
As I get ready to leave Happy Hearts and join the work force at Ash/Craft, I will miss everyone at Happy Hearts School because they believed in me and gave me my wings to fly. They were very happy for me when I became a member of a real family.

I want to thank my little sister Stephanie in heaven, for watching over me and helping me, and my Grandma's and Grandpa's and Aunt Shirley, who are in heaven too, My big Sister Angela, my Brother-In-Law Dean, Aunt Marian, Uncle John, Grandpa Grunau, and my cousins, and especially my Mom and Dad.

I want to thank Miss Larson at Saints John and Paul and all the new friends that I met there. I want to thank my Special Olympics family, Bill and Jill Jenner Casey, Pat, Jodi, Molly, and Dick because they helped me in sports.

Most of all I want to thank my Happy hearts family for their patience and guidance; thank you so much. Thank you for the memories. I will not say "goodbye" for now I will just say, "Till we meet again."

**Happy Hearts Commencement, 2001**  
**May 24, 2001**



*Nickolas Marsh hugs Susan Bland, a teaching assistant at Happy Hearts, after graduation Thursday evening at Happy Hearts. An Ashtabula Star Beacon photo.*

2001 graduates: Tracy Begin; Nick Flanary; Renee Barnard; Beth Harley; Nick Marsh; Matt Mucci; Frank Woodworth; Jeremy Weber; Jessica Baker; Justin Reffner; Sarah Cartner; Ronald Wheeler; Chad Westfall.

**Nickolas Marsh's Speech**

It is nice to see so many people tonight at Happy Hearts 2001 graduation. I am glad to be graduating this year. I have worked very hard to get to this point. I will miss all of the staff here at Happy Hearts and at the Sts. John and Paul satellite. I hope that the friendships that I have made will last throughout my life. I know that the many things I have learned will help me on my way to being independent. As I move through my life, I will work hard and remember all of the things that I have learned. Thank you to all who have helped me. Because of you I can read, do math, and now hold a job. My years here have been fun even when there have been some sad times in my life. It has been a great learning experience. Again, thanks.

**Matthew John Mucci's Speech**

Welcome everybody!

I want to thank everybody at Happy Hearts. I will miss you! I want to thank my mom and dad. I love you. I will miss my friends. It has been fun. Thank you for helping me to get to this special day.

**Jeremy Joe Weber's Speech**

Thank you to all my teachers and assistants. I will miss my classmates. I will be working at Ash/Craft after graduation. Thanks for the memories!



### Jessica Ellen Baker's Speech

Welcome family and friends! I would like to thank all of the staff who have helped me here at Happy Hearts. I will remember all the friends that I have made here. We have shared good times as well as bad. I hope in 20 years that you will all remember me – because I know that I will remember all of you. I would also like to thank my family for helping me through my years at school. Thanks for listening to me for these few moments.

### Sarah Lynn Cartner's Speech

Good evening. My name is Sarah Cartner. I want to welcome everyone to the 2001 graduation. I wish to thank my teachers, assistants, grandparents, and parents for encouraging me to stay in school. To my friends, I will miss you all. As I get ready to graduate and go out into the real world, I want to say that the training I have received here will help me reach my goal of becoming independent. Thank you.

### Elizabeth Ann Harley's Speech

Good evening!

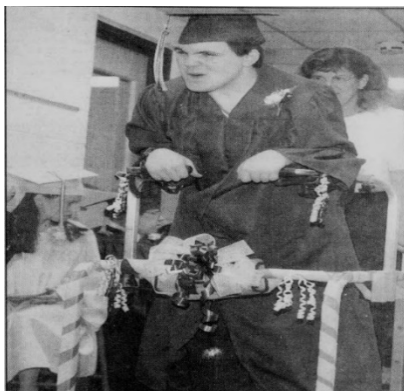
I would like to welcome our families, friends, and all staff who have come to be with us this special night. This is a happy day in my life. I began at Happy Hearts in 1979. Many good teachers have taught me things that I will need to know for life. I believe my years at Sts. John and Paul have prepared me for life ahead.

Thanks to all of the people who have helped me over the past 21 years.

I am ready to leave school and go to work. I hope to work in childcare or at Ash/Craft. This may be the end of my school years – but what I have learned has prepared me to work, have friends, and have a better life. Thank you.

Tracy Lee Begin was a member of the graduating class of 2001 and she was looking forward to her graduation day. She passed away on April 12, 2001.

### Happy Hearts Commencement, May 30, 2002



*Jason Winters makes his dream come true by walking into his graduation instead of using his wheelchair Thursday night at Happy Hearts School.*

Shelley Terry, staff writer, wrote and photographed a graduation story for the Ashtabula Star Beacon. Michael Barricklow; Nicole Spangler; Hans Stoltz; and Jason Winters graduated.

“This is always a very special evening for our graduates and their families,” said Superintendent Larry Korland. “We commend the students for their perseverance.”

For Jason, just leaving his wheelchair and walking down the aisle with the aid of only a walker fulfilled a dream---not just for him, but his family. His teachers knew this and encouraged him by decorating the walker with blue ribbons.

Michael Barricklow, the first-class speaker, took a few seconds at the podium to compose his emotions before reading his prepared speech. With his head bowed and tears falling from his face, he thanked his family and the teachers and the staff at Happy Hearts.

“I will try to make all of you proud of me,” he said. “I will work hard to keep my job. Thanks again to all of you for helping me be who I am.”  
Michael saluted the audience who broke out in wild applause.

“It’s really special because we have seen how far they have come in their accomplishments,” said Maureen Hamblin, a classroom assistant, as she reached for a tissue to dab her tear-filled eyes.

Hans Stoltz, radiating confidence, gave an enthusiastic speech recalling happy school days and great meals in the kitchen.

“I loved the Happy Hearts cooks, their apple crisp,” he said. “Thanks for feeding me.”

Hans said he would always remember the many friends he made at the school. “Thanks to so many of you, I am now ready to live on my own and get my own job,” he said.

When handed the microphone, Jason Winters and Nicole Spangler also expressed gratitude to their teachers and staff for their love and support.

Speaker Janet Neville, a member of the Ashtabula County Board of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities, talked about the challenges of being the mother of a disabled child. She said raising her son, Fred Neville who also graduated from Happy Hearts, taught her many valuable lessons. She said among the most valuable were:

Never give up.

Celebrate little victories.

Appreciate all the things they can do.

## Happy Hearts Commencement, May 29, 2003



*Michael DeMarino provides a little help for Jamie Smock, one of the four students graduating from Happy Hearts in 2003. Ashtabula Star Beacon photograph.*

## Happy Hearts Commencement 2003

Melissa A. Meola; Adam Roitz; Jamie D. Smock; and Arthur Stokes graduated in 2003.

The graduation program featured a “Sincere thanks and appreciation to all the staff at Happy Hearts School, both past and present. They have provided an educational atmosphere of love and support and have helped to bring these graduates to this great moment in their life.”

### Melissa Meola’s Speech

Good evening and welcome to the class of 2003 graduation. Today is a special day for my classmates and me. When I think back about my school years, my feelings flow like a roller coaster ride. I am both happy and sad. I am both excited and afraid. While I welcome the freedoms of adulthood, I wish I were a carefree ten-year-old again.

Even though I am leaving I am taking with me good memories. Memories like my crazy friend Lacey, bubbly Wild Bill, dances at Ash/Craft, school proms and nagging teachers. Tonight, I take the first step into my future; a future that means getting a job, independent living and being a good citizen. In closing, I would like to thank everyone who taught me new skills that will help me to succeed.

Thank you and God bless all of you!

### Jamie Smock’s Speech

Welcome ladies and gentlemen and class of 2003. I have been waiting for this day a long time. I am happy to be graduating. Throughout my school years I have made many friends. My plan is to work at Ash/Craft and help my brother Troy with landscape work.

My experiences here have been rewarding and I will miss all of you. Thank you!

Anne M. Zeitler, superintendent, welcomed and introduced guests. Robert Taylor, vice president of the MR/DD Board, Michael W. DeMarino Director of Educational Services, Brett Horvath, Assistant Superintendent, Geneva, and Dr. Kathy Dye, Special Education Coordinator from Conneaut, conferred the diplomas. The Edgewood Band, directed by Connie Sommers provided special music by James Curnon titled "Edgewood Festival."

### **Happy Hearts Commencement, May 27, 2004**



*Inez Gaumer, president of the ARC of Ashtabula County, addresses the Happy Hearts commencement. Desiree Kay Hicks; Bill Ridling; Timothy J. Nieder; Jennifer M. Linn; Douglas Brian Scholz; and James N. Todd wait to receive the diplomas.*

Anne M. Zeitler, Superintendent, introduced the Class of 2004. The graduates of 2004 were Amanda Irene Hayes; Desiree Kay Hicks; Jennifer M. Linn; Timothy J. Nieder; Bill Ridling; Douglas Brian Scholz; and James N. Todd.

After the 2004 graduates processed to the strains of Pomp and Circumstance, Anne M. Zeitler, Superintendent welcomed and introduced the guests.

Class Speakers were Desiree Kay Hicks, Bill Ridling, and Douglas Brian Scholz.

Desiree Kay Hicks said: Thank you staff for everything you have done for me.

Bill Ridling said: "I want to thank everyone at Happy Hearts. I will miss you, my teachers, my assistants, all of my friends, and Jesse. This is goodbye.

Doug Scholz said: Good evening. I am very excited about graduating, and also very sad to be leaving so many friends. I want to thank Jim Kiser for keeping me out of trouble and teaching me about money.

I want to thank Cindy Bucci for helping me with reading and spelling. I have

learned a lot being here. Think of me when I am gone. I will always think of you.

Ron Tate, President of the Mental Retardation Developmental Disabilities Board and Michael W. DeMarino, Director of Educational Services, Brett Horvath, Assistant Superintendent, Geneva, and Ms. Charlene Kimble, Special Ed. Coordinator-Buckeye conferred the diplomas. The Edgewood Highschool Band provided the special Music, and Mrs. Inez Gaumer, President of the Arc of Ashtabula County presented the gifts.

### **Happy Hearts Commencement, June 2, 2005**



*Martha Runnion celebrates Happy Hearts graduation.  
Ashtabula Star Beacon photo by Warren Dillaway.*

Graduates of 2005 were Lacey Marie Johnston; Tiffany Rose Mordarski; Michael Alan Phipps; and Martha Lee Runnion. Class speakers were Marlene Mordarski and Tiffany Mordarski and Laura Hood, speaking on behalf of Martha Runnion.

#### **Lacey Johnston's Speech**

Good evening. Thanks everyone. I will miss my friends.

Thanks Pat for helping me get a job. I am out of here, and I luv ya!

Tiffany Mordarski's Speech. Welcome everyone.

I thank my family for loving me and helping me. Thank you mom and dad for finding Happy Hearts School for me. Thank you for letting me work with Bobbi in the gym this year. I liked working with Bobbi and all the students in their gym classes. I will miss Alice, Vicki, Tracey-everybody here at school. Goodbye.

Ms. Anne Zeitler, Superintendent, presented the Class of 2005 and Ron Tate, President of the MRDD Board. Michael W. DeMarino, Director of Education; Brett Horvath, Assistant Superintendent, Geneva; Ms. Charalene Kimble, Special Ed. Coord., Buckeye; and Joseph F. Donatone, Superintendent, Buckeye conferred the diplomas.

Mrs. Inez Gaumer, President of the ARC of Ashtabula County presented the gifts. The Edgewood Band conducted by Mrs. Connie Sommers performed the special music.

## Happy Hearts Commencement, May 31, 2006



*Krista Marie Stonum and Vincent E. Fuller, Jr. celebrated their Happy Hearts School graduation. Photo by Warren Dillaway, Ashtabula Star Beacon*

2006 Graduates: Vincent E. Fuller, Jr.; Christina E. Mongell; and Krista Marie Stonum.

Students Vincent E. Fuller, Jr and Krista Marie Stonum walked the graduation walk on May 31, 2006.

They have walked the same educational path longer than the traditional four years of high school. Most students at Happy Hearts have been classmates for longer than the traditional four years of high school.

Kenneth J. Schmiesing, director of educational services at Happy Hearts, explained that often students arrive at Happy Hearts when they are very young, some just a few weeks old, and they progress through the academic ranks until they are 21 years old and graduate. These years are the equivalent of an educational life time. After Happy Hearts graduation, many students move on to Ash/Craft Industries to continue the journey that they started with Happy Hearts. Vincent and Krista plan to continue their education at Ash/Craft Industries.

Anne M. Zeitler, Happy Hearts School Superintendent, emphasized the significance of graduation night for Happy Hearts students, and then introduced Kristene DeCaro, parent and Ashtabula County Board of Developmental Disabilities Board member. Kristene narrated her personal journey as the parent of a child with cerebral palsy. She outlined her stark choices in 1976: sign papers making her daughter the ward of the state or take her back home and risk adverse effects on her older daughter and her marriage. The DeCaros chose to bring their daughter home.

Happy Hearts is a special place for Kristene DeCaro and her daughter. She remembered her daughter's first experiences and said that along with growth, her daughter experienced learning, friends, dedication, and love.

Kristene DeCaro has worked through the years to help Happy Hearts keep growing and, in her remarks, she acknowledged the entire school roster, including janitors, teachers, aides, and bus drivers. "I want to thank you from the bottom of my

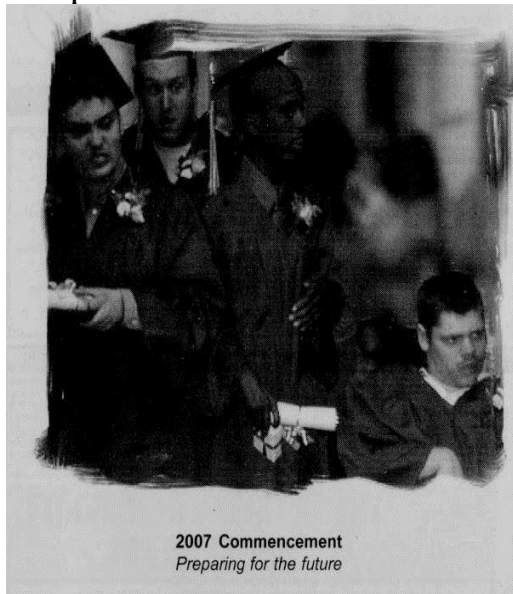
heart,” she said.

## **Happy Hearts Commencement, June 2, 2007**

With a joyful backdrop of applause and cheers, four Happy Hearts School 2007 graduates received their diplomas. John. Henson II, Reynold “Derval” Lindsey; Stephen Joseph McClure, Jr.; and Christopher Salaben collected their diplomas in person. Graduates Ben Johnson and Nicole Danielle Plemel could not attend the ceremony.

Speaking for his class, John T. Henson II said, “My classmates and I have waited a long time for this day. Thank you to all our teachers, friends, and family. We take with us many happy memories.”

Guest speaker Stephen McClure Sr. said: "There are all types of families, including your school family, but Happy Hearts is more than a family: It is a world all to its own. This is a place where there is a can-do attitude, a place ruled by love, compassion and commitment."



As McClure praised the graduates, he said everyone should emulate the kind and compassion of these young graduates.

Cindy Bucci, who has worked for 21 years as an instructor's assistant at Happy Hearts and was very moved by the ceremony. "We love these kids. We get involved in their lives and give them all we can to help them succeed," she said.

The Edgewood High School Band played musical selections including “Pomp and Circumstance,” and Ashtabula County Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities Board Superintendent Anne Zeitler, said that “It is always a special occasion to have a time of celebration for their accomplishments and happiness as they step out into the future.”

She recognized Nadine Moroski sitting in the audience, as being one of the original parents who began Happy Hearts School 51 years ago.

## Happy Hearts Commencement, May 28, 2008



*Aubrey Brogdon waits to walk down the aisle during the 2008 Happy Hearts School graduation on May 29, 2008. An Ashtabula Star Beacon photo.*

The smiles of five Happy Hearts School graduates outshone the bright sunset outside as they marched down the aisle in the school gymnasium to receive their diplomas on May 29, 2008. The graduates were Nicole Litnar; Aubrey Brogdon; Ashley Kenyon; Katrina Miller; Dylan Wludyga and John Laird who could not attend the ceremony.

Class speaker Nicole Litnar said, “My classmates and I wish to thank our teachers, assistants, bus drivers and therapists. We especially want to thank our family members, including those who are watching this ceremony from their seats in heaven.”

Nicole Litnar’s father, James, tearfully gave the commencement address as he reminisced with the audience many of the special moments with his daughter over the years.

“Nicole never ceases to amaze me. She appreciates everything; nothing escapes her; she loves everyone; she sees only the good in people — she is the person I wish I could be,” he said. “As a society will we continue to love and protect the weakest among us as the people who have taught my daughter over the years have?”

Superintendent Anne Zeitler recognized many people in the audience, including Nadine Moroski, one of the original parents who started Happy Hearts School more than 50 years ago. Ashtabula County Commissioners Peggy Carlo and Joe Moroski also attended the ceremony.

Proud mother Helen Wludyga, whose son Dylan received his diploma, expressed her gratitude for all the teachers, aides and the people involved with the summer Reach and Teach camp, for all they have done over the years to help her son achieve his potential.



“I never dreamed Dylan would go to public school and experience school with typical kids his own age, but he has exceeded all expectations and we are very proud of him,” she said.

### **Happy Hearts Commencement, May 27, 2009**



*The Happy Hearts School 2009 graduates are (back row, left to right) Michael Bailey Jr.; Robert Seaton; Adam Henson; and Nicole Lambert. Front row (left to right) Kyle Lawver and Megan Bailey. Photo by Bill West of the Ashtabula Star Beacon.*

Nicole Lambert; Kyle Lawver; and Megan Bailey.

Graduates: Michael Alan Bailey, Jr.; Robert Seaton; Adam Henson;

### **Happy Hearts Commencement, May 26, 2010**

*Four students, (left to right) Eric Weber, Betty May Marengo, Craig Rankin, and Michael Bencar, graduated from Happy Hearts School on May 26, 2010. Bill West of the Ashtabula Star Beacon took the photo.*

Five students graduated from Happy Hearts School on Monday May 26, 2010.



They are Eric Weber, Betty May Marengo, Craig Rankin, and Michael Bencar. Robert Prine is also listed as a graduate in the program. Class speakers were Eric M. Weber and Michael Steven Bencar and Mrs. Maureen Rankin was guest speaker.

Eric Weber's speech. Good evening and welcome to the 2010 Happy Hearts School Graduation. My classmates and I thank

each of you for being here tonight. We also thank you for your help during our school years.

Mrs. Janet Neville, President of the DD Board; Michael W. DeMarino, Director of Education at Happy Hearts School; Brett Horvath, Assistant Superintendent of Geneva Schools; Mrs. Sylvia Atkinson Principal, Lakeside High School; and Drew Hinkle, Director of Special Services, Conneaut Area City Schools conferred the diplomas. The Edgewood Band, conducted by Mrs. Connie Sommers, provided the music and family, friends, and graduates sang the Happy Hearts School Alma Mater. Anne M. Zeitler, Superintendent, presented the Class of 2010. The Arc of Ashtabula County provided the reception and gifts for the graduates.

### **Happy Hearts Commencement, May 26, 2011**



Curtis John DelValle graduated from Happy Hearts as the only graduate in his class and without words, but he his classmates, friends, and family provided an admiring audience and he expressed his happiness with a radiant smile and joyful sounds.

His mother Isabel Abames said that her son's big smile told her and everyone else how he felt more subtly than words. "A big smile tells me he's happy," she said.

Curtis enjoyed a graduation ceremony resembling a high school commencement, complete with music from the Edgewood Senior High School Band, an audience of family, peers, teachers and dignitaries, and a reception with a cake from the Ashtabula County chapter of Arc. The processional and recessional of graduates was the only thing missing since Curtis is the Class of 2011, a rare event according to his teacher Michelle Diemer.

Michelle Diemer, his teacher for the past four years, explained that the school decided to move a usually evening event to the school day so his peers could watch him graduate. Michelle Diemer and teacher Jennifer Bunnell spoke at the commencement, commenting on his infectious smile, good sense of humor, and supportive family. Curtis truly has a "happy heart," Michelle said.

Over the past 21 years, Isabel Abames sometimes wondered if Curtis would ever graduate because of his seizures and his limited communication. She said the most challenging part of raising and educating Curtis has been communication "because he does not speak words like everybody else." He became a student at Happy Hearts seven years ago when his family moved to Conneaut from New York.

His mother said that the Happy Hearts staff has done a wonderful job and “they all have shown him so much love and care. I could not ask for a better school system for him to attend.”

Isabel said she and his brothers and sister would celebrate with Curtis by going out to dinner at Perkins Restaurant and she predicted that Curtis would order a cheeseburger.

Curtis plans to work at Ash/Craft workshop after he has finished celebrating his graduation.

### **Happy Hearts School Commencement, May 24, 2012**

The smiles and congratulations for the five Happy Hearts 2012 graduates were large enough to share with a class of one hundred graduates marching down the aisle.

Johnathon Lee Peterson; Herman Eugene Bratton; Phillip John Carlo III; Shari Ann Nagle; and Corrine LeAnne Wellbaum received their diplomas from Michael W. DeMarino, director of education at Happy Hearts and Janet Neville, president of the Ashtabula County Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities Board.

Johnathon Peterson’s mother, Melissa Townsend felt particularly proud because doctors had predicted that Johnathon would never walk or talk and he graduated from Happy Hearts where he was class speaker and also from Lakeside High School. She said her sons Johnny and Jimmy who had previously graduated from Edgewood Senior High, were successful because of faith. “If you believe in yourself and in God you can accomplish anything,” she said.

The Edgewood High School Band with Connie Sommers as director provided the music and the ARC of Ashtabula County held a reception for the graduates and their families and presented each graduate with a gift.

### **Happy Hearts Commencement, May 30, 2013**

Thomas Miles knows that a blessing is a favor or a special gift. He believes that Happy Hearts is a blessing and he articulated his belief at the Happy Hearts School graduation ceremonies on May 30, 2013.

“In my life, and I’m sure the other graduates would also say, we have been blessed by the opportunities we have had at school and through the people that have helped us find those opportunities,” he said.

Along with Thomas Miles, Eric Andrew Hagenbaugh; Destiny R. Lagese; Marie R. Lagese; Jamie Paul Lister; Brittany L. Prince; Kodi Allen Renwick; Carly Marie Webber; and Christopher Henry West received their diplomas.

Happy Hearts Teacher James Kaiser is proud of the Class of 2013 and every other graduating class. He said that in his 31 years of teaching at the school every year is a big year and everyone is always so proud of our graduates. He is especially proud of Destiny Lagese. “I had Destiny as my student for four years. It has been a pleasure to see her succeed to grow in the areas of reading, writing, and math,” he said.

Principal Patrick Guliano, who said his past experience has been in public schools and high schools is spending his first year as the head of Happy Hearts. He commented that “graduations here are so much more emotional. We see these students grow in so many aspects. They show so much persistence.”

He said that many people work together to make graduation special, including the Edgewood Senior High School Band who provided music for the ceremonies. “We thank the Edgewood Band, we thank the students, the parents, and the staff for doing their all to make today that much better,” Principal Guliano said.

### **Happy Hearts Commencement, May 29, 2014.**

Six Students Graduate in Gymnasium Ceremonies

Nathan K. Brown; Shelby E. Gerred; Mariah Harris; Zachary T. Henson; Austin H. Judson; and Kevin J. Kolman graduated from Happy Hearts School in 2014.

Class speaker Kevin Kolman, who is autistic, used a Dr. Seuss poem to express his feelings. “Congratulations! Today is your day. You are off to Great Places! You are off and away,” he said. “You have brains in your head. You have feet in your shoes. You can steer yourself any direction you choose.”

The other graduates were Nathan K. Brown, Shelby E. Gerred, Mariah Harris, Zachary T. Henson, and Austin H. Judson.

In the commencement address, Kevin’s mother Ellen Kolman reminisced about

special times with her son and recounted his accomplishments in his years at Happy Hearts School. “Happy Hearts is the jewel of Ashtabula County,” she said. “We trust them with our precious treasures.”

Ellen Kolman read a poem called “The Orchid,” by an unknown author. “Most children are like dandelions and can grow wherever they may land very easily. They are common and hardy and robust. Other children are like orchids and can only thrive in just the right greenhouse conditions. When they bloom, they are rare, fragile, beautiful, and very special. You are an orchid child, so fortunate to have the right people caring for you. Though you are fragile, you are so very special and it is breath taking to see you bloom.”

She said her son Kevin bloomed at Happy Hearts.

Another proud parent, Jack Henson, watched his son Zachary receive his diploma. He thanked the teachers, aides, and staff and counselors at the summer Reach and Teach Camp, for their efforts over the years to help Zachary reach his potential. Family and friends and the graduates enjoyed a dessert reception in the school gymnasium after the graduation program.



### **Happy Hearts Commencement, May 28, 2015**

*(Left to right) Alice Marie Dalrymple, Jalisa Le Anna White, and Andres Walsh are three members of the five-person Happy Hearts graduating class of 2015. Ashtabula Star Beacon Photo by Shelley Terry.*

The Graduating Class of 2015 was Marvin D. Byler; Alice M. Dalrymple; Brandon T. Lee; Andres A. Walsh; and Jalisa Le Anna White.

Against a backdrop of pink and white petunias decorating the podium, Superintendent Anne Zeitler presented the five-member 2015 graduating class of Happy Hearts School on May 28, 2015. The male graduates wore dark blue caps and gowns with white carnation boutonnieres and the girls were dressed in light

blue caps and gowns with white carnation corsages.

Happy Hearts 2015 graduate Jalisa White and her mother Jean White, shared graduation presentations at the ceremony. While she dabbed away her tears, Jean White remembered that when Jalisa was a baby doctors had told her that they couldn't be certain about Jalisa's mental capacity. Now her daughter Jalisa not only graduated, but she sang "Wind Beneath My Wings," by Bette Midler to a standing ovation from the 120 people attending the ceremony in the school gymnasium.

Jean White talked about Jalisa's interest in music. "Today, every song she hears, she somehow remembers the words," Jean White said. "She loves to sing." She said that it was humbling to speak at the Happy Hearts graduation and thanked the teachers, staff, and administrators for helping her daughter grow and reach her goals.

Focusing on the other graduates as well as on her daughter's achievements. Jean White characterized Brandon Lee as friendly, welcoming others, and loving sports.

She said that Alice Dalrymple had the gift of endurance and had won medals in Special Olympics. Alice gave back to Happy Hearts by working with preschoolers. Turning her attention to Marvin Byler, Jean said that he loved basketball and football and church and singing. He gets confidence from his family.

Andres Walsh attracts the girls and his laugh is contagious. He was crowned prom king a few weeks ago," Jean said, smiling. "He is thankful for his loving family." Ending her speech, Jean asked the audience to applaud the graduates.

The Edgewood High School Band with director Connie Sommer provided the music for the graduation ceremonies and the Arc of Ashtabula County held a cake and punch reception and presented each graduate with a gift.

## Happy Hearts Commencement, May 25, 2016

The front cover of the 2016 graduation program says:

Life is like a camera...  
Just focus on what's important and capture the  
good times..  
develop from the negatives and if things don't  
work out... Just take another shot...

Ashtabula County Board of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities  
Anne M. Zeitler presented the graduates of 2016 who were Ferdinan Albino, Ervin  
Miller, and Joseph Nordquest

Patrick N. Guliano, director of education; Stephanie Canzonetta; Deborah  
Cardaman; Vicki Moer; Patricia Fields; Inez Gaumer; Jim Kiser; and Modris  
Krumins comprised the Graduation Committee.

Ashtabula County Board of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities  
members were Mrs. Kristene DeCaro, president. Brett Horvath, vice president;  
Ronald Cramer, secretary; Don Cosner; Andrew Misiak; and Mrs. Tracy Giddings.  
The message on the back of the program said:

Imagine, Believe, Achieve Ashtabula  
County Board of DD 1955-2015  
"If you can imagine it, You can  
achieve it;  
If you can dream it,  
You can become it."

## Happy Hearts Commencement, May 31, 2017



*Michael Spaulding, a Happy Hearts School Class of 2017 graduate, shook hands with county commissioners J.P. Ducro IV and Katherine Whittington after receiving his diploma Wednesday. Ashtabula Star Beacon photograph by Justin Dennis.*

Happy Hearts 2017 Commencement was held on May 31, 2017. Cody Edwards; Wilmer Miller; Michael Spaulding; and Jacob Valentin were the graduates. Patrick N. Guliano was the guest speaker. The Edgewood High School Band, conducted by Mrs. Connie Sommers provided the music and Inez Gaumer presented the graduates.

Mike Spaulding's graduate speech.

Good morning, friends, family, and fellow graduates. I want to talk today about the word, "New." When I started high school Mrs. Cardaman said, "High school is a time to try NEW THINGS." We tried new classes, new foods, and new adventures. We went to a musical, a basketball game, and a wrestling match.

High school is a time to make NEW FRIENDS! I have had many of the same friends since elementary school, but I made new friends at high school: Isabella, Felix, Brody, and Alex.

Graduation is an ending, but it is also a NEW BEGINNING. I think the NEW things I remember from high school will help us as adults.

**TRY NEW THINGS!**

**MAKE NEW FRIENDS!**

Thank you!

Michael Spaulding





**Happy Hearts Commencement, May 18, 2018**

*Jacob Jones, a 2018 graduate of Happy Hearts School, processes graduation ceremonies on Friday afternoon at the school in Kingsville Township.*



*Nicole Adeline Madden and Happy Hearts School Secretary Stephanie Canzonetta trade high-fives during Happy Hearts School graduation on May 18, 2018. Ashtabula Star Beacon photo by Warren Dillaway.*



Alexis Brown, 2018 Happy Hearts graduate, is all smiles.

Six Happy Hearts Graduates Take the Next Step In Their Lives

Today is your day and your mountain is awaiting you.”

Alexis Marie Brown; Kristen Nicole Fink; Jasmine Haley-Marie Hillyer; Jacob Anthony Jones; Nicole Adeline Madden; and Chelsie L. Otto eagerly marched into the Happy Hearts School gymnasium to claim their diplomas at the May 18, 2018, Happy Hearts graduation.

Happy Hearts School Principal Patrick Gulliano greeted family and friends attending the ceremony. He thanked staff from the school and Ashcraft Industries for their support, saying students and staff have bonded over the school year. “It is a family affair,” he said. Class Speaker Jacob Jones announced each family that they could stand to honor their graduate.

Carol Mentges, a therapist at Happy Hearts who has worked with disabled children

for 50 years, was the graduation speaker. Building her speech around the Dr. Seuss book, “Oh, The Places You’ll Go,” she challenged students to reach for their full potential and encouraged them to explore as many places they could reach in their lives.

Giving a brief history of Happy Hearts, Carol said the school started in a church basement in 1955, and by 1968, the founding parents had acquired state funding and enough students and community support to move into its present building. “This year we will complete 50 years in this building and many graduates have passed through these doors,” she said.

Although the crowd and the graduates were upbeat, an undercurrent of sadness ran beneath the ceremony, because the future of Happy Hearts is uncertain. After voters defeated a November levy, the Ashtabula County Board of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities announced it would close the school.

Board President Andrew Misiak said that negotiations with the County Commissioners and Educational Service to save the school are ongoing and the possibility of Happy Hearts remaining at its Kingsville Township location where the school has been since 1968 is still on the table. Then he focused the conversation back to the students. “It is all about them today. We are excited for them,” he said.

Inez Gaumer, a parent and volunteer at the MR/DD Board and the Ashtabula County Council for Retarded Citizens in various capacities for the past 50 years, said that back in 1954, parents of special needs children introduced the idea for a special school for the children. “It is hard to keep from crying. My son went here and he is down at Ashcraft. He has been there 32 years,” she said.

## Special Stories – Melissa Ann Meola



Melissa Meola and Jamie Smock were crowned king and queen of the Happy Hearts Prom on May 2, 2003. Just three weeks later she graduated from Happy Hearts School.

Melissa Meola's Graduation Speech, May 29, 2003

Good evening and welcome to the class of 2003 graduation. Today is a special day for my classmates and me. When I think back about my school years, my feelings flow like a roller coaster ride.

I am both happy and sad. I am both excited and afraid. While I welcome the freedoms of adulthood, I wish I were a carefree ten-year-old again. Even though I am leaving I am

taking with me good memories. Memories like my crazy friend Lacey, bubbly Wild Bill, dances at Ash/Craft, school proms and nagging teachers.

Tonight, I take the first step into my future; a future that means getting a job, independent living and being a good citizen. In closing, I would like to thank everyone who taught me skills that will help me to succeed.

Thank you and God bless all of you!

Almost two weeks after Melissa graduated from Happy Hearts, this notice appeared in the Ashtabula Star Beacon on Monday, June 9, 2003.

Melissa Ann Meola, 21, of Ashtabula died unexpectedly at home on Monday June 9, 2003. Born June 13, 1981, in Geneva, she was the daughter of Timothy and Kathleen Phillips Meola.

## Chapter Nine: Proms, Dances, Special Days, and Just Plain Fun!

Proms....



May 24, 1993- "Dream River" at Happy Hearts Prom

*Two prom goers smile at the efforts of their classmates while enjoying a dance themselves at the Prom. Ashtabula Star Beacon photo by Jim Matthews*

"I started to get nervous this morning," said Betty Pearson, mother of student Christina Pearson. "Just getting everything together and ready to go. I put the prom ticket in Christina's new purse, but she took it out to put her makeup in and forgot to put the ticket back in. We were halfway here before we thought of it," she said laughing. Seeing her daughter with her date, Bob Stewart, was a special moment for Pearson.

"I'm speechless," she said. "Just the expression on her face says what it means to her."

The theme was "Dream River." The cafeteria was transformed by Conneaut High School students Rochelle McKiethan, Sarah McKiethan, and Keith Sherman, who painted some of the backdrops for the evening.

Other student volunteers and Happy Hearts students helped, arranging donated theatrical scenery, including a Venetian gondola and gondolier.

"I love my tuxedo," said prom goer Jeff Schultz who took Jennifer Aldrich to the prom. "I think the prom is great and everything is fun."

### **Sharing a Dance at the Prom-2001**



*Ben Hoffman, a member of the Conneaut High School National Honor Society, and Melissa Meola share a dance at the Happy Hearts School prom, April 20, 2001.*

### **Dancing with Mom at the Prom-2002**

*Monday, April 29, 2002. Jason Winters enjoys a dance with his mother Janice during the 10th Annual Happy Hearts Prom Friday night at Happy Hearts School. Ashtabula Star Beacon photo by Warren Dillaway.*



*April 29, 2002. Nicole Litnar, Alan Simpson (far right) Adam Henson and his date Katrina Miller (right) share dances during the Happy Hearts School Prom. Photo by Daniel Kraus of the Ashtabula Star Beacon. “Twisting the Night Away” at Happy Hearts Prom-2003*



*David Baker (center) dances with Megan Mundi (left) and Barb Patchen during the Happy Hearts Prom on Friday, May 2, 2003.*



## Prom Queen and King, 2003

*Melissa Meola and Jamie Smock were crowned king and queen of the Happy Hearts Prom on May 2, 2003.*

*More than fifty people gathered in the cafeteria of Happy Hearts School for a night of fun. Some of the prom goers danced in their wheelchairs with a little help from their friends. Part of the fun included hula hoop contests, food, and learning new dances. Warren Dillaway took the photos for the Ashtabula Star Beacon.*

*Beacon.*

## “Wild, Wild West” at Happy Hearts Prom, 2005



CARL E. FEATHER / Star Beacon

# Prom Night

LEFT: TIFFANY MORDARSKI gives the thumbs up to her friends and parents, Marlene and Tom, after being crowned queen of the Happy Hearts Prom April 22. Tiffany, 21, will graduate in June and plans to work at Ash Craft Industries. She is a resident of Austinburg.

### ‘Wild, Wild West’ theme for Happy Hearts Prom

By CARL E. FEATHER  
Lifestyle Editor

Tiffany Mordarski skipped lunch Friday. She was too excited to think about food. It was prom night. “She hasn’t eaten all day,” said her mother, Marlene, last Friday evening. “She said she would eat at the prom.”

As it turned out, Tiffany was crowned queen of the 14th Annual Happy Hearts School Prom, and food took a back seat to the excitement of the moment. Tiffany, 21, had little to say about the honor, except that it was a surprise. But her screams of joy and the huge smile she wore as she danced with Prom King John Henson said it all.

With the possible exception of graduation, the prom is the most anticipated event of the academic year at the Route 84, Kingsville Township, school. “As soon as we come back to school in the fall, or even before then, if I see them at the fair, they talk about the prom,” said Amy Piotrowski, intermediate teacher and co-coordinator of the prom.


This is the fourth year Amy coordinated the event. She is assisted by Candy Fultz, who also works as her teacher’s assistant. They selected a theme of “Wild, Wild West” and decorated the school cafeteria to the hilt with bandanas, boot balloons, paper stockade fence, wagon wheels, saddles, bales of hay and other Western gear. Paper backdrops were made by school staff and students at Happy Hearts satellite locations — Braden Junior High, Lakeside and Geneva.

Staff and others who chaperoned the event wore western wear, and the students were encouraged to do the same.

Some, like Megan Bailey, 17, took a hybrid approach. She wore a pastel flower-print gown with a lavender cowboy hat.

“I come to the prom because I really love it,” she said. “I like to dance with my friends. They are my best friends.”

Hors d’oeuvres, cookies, snacks and cup-



LEFT: Lakeside Nine student Laura Hood and her sister Katty (center) dance with their cousin, Martha Runnon, a student at Happy Hearts’ Lakeside satellite school.



RIGHT: Prom King John Henson and Queen Tiffany Mordarski dance following their crowning early in the evening of the 14th Annual Happy Hearts Prom at the school on Route 84 in Kingsville Township.

cakes were available for munching, but most students’ were focused on the dance floor from the moment they entered the room.

“They dance so much, they hardly eat,” said Sally Flash, a physical therapist at the school. “From the time the music starts until it stops, they dance.”

The prom is open to students age 13 and older who attend Happy Hearts or its satellite programs. Amy said about 25 students were signed up to attend Friday night’s event. Each student paid a \$3 cover charge for the night of entertainment, which included the DJ work of Mark Allen.

Parents stay until the king and queen are crowned, about 30 minutes into the evening, then allow their children to slip into a world of independence for two hours.

“Cindy and I look at the kids who are going to be graduating, and we try to give it to somebody who hasn’t had the opportunity to be king and queen yet, like at the Valentine’s Day dance,” said Amy Piotrowski, explaining how the royalty are selected.

The crowning of her daughter as queen was especially sweet for Marlene and her husband Tom. She said doctors had told them early in Tiffany’s life that she would never talk.

Thanks to the instruction of Happy Hearts teachers and Tiffany’s hard work, she not only talks, but will graduate from the school in June.

“This is a wonderful school,” said Marlene Mordarski as she watched Tiffany and her cadre of friends disappear into the cafeteria and their enchanted evening.

## “We Danced the Night Away” at the Prom- 2007



“Paris” at Happy Hearts Prom-2008

May 2, 2008. Dylan Wludyga was chosen Prom King and Katrina Miller as Prom Queen at the Happy Hearts 2008 Prom. This year’s theme was “Paris.”

## “Dancing with the Stars”-2009



Happy Hearts School Prom was held May 1, 2009, at the Geneva State Park Lodge and Conference Center. The highlight of the evening was the crowning of Prom King, Adam Henson, and Prom Queen, Megan Bailey. this year’s theme was “Dancing with the Stars.” Music was provided by Tom Lucas in the star-studded ball room. May 23, 2009.

## Dancing



*Bunny Hopping in the 1970s.*

*These couples from Ash/Craft Industries and Happy Hearts School (left to right) Ron Cole and Audrey Thomas, Mary Licate and Jeff Spencer, Renee Jenner and Charles Lowery, Randy Hershey and Donna Zeller are in step for a good time on May 7, 1983.*

*Tony Esposito's Band furnished music for the event. Photo by Vern Fuchs.*



*Robert Stewart of Andover enjoys a dance with Carrie Stowe of Geneva during a hoedown celebration that closed out the Happy Hearts Summer Program. An Ashtabula Star Beacon photograph.*



## Sock hop keeps Ash/Craft Hoping into the night

April 17, 2010. Bobby Stewart of Ashtabula and Tammy Hayes of Conneaut dance at the Ash/Craft Sock Hop Friday evening at Happy Hearts School.



Poodle skirts whisked through the air Friday night as dozens of people enjoyed an evening of dancing at the Ash/ Craft Industries' sock hop.

“This is our first sock hop,” said Bonnie Roosa, who has worked as a bus driver for 18 years. She said she came up with the idea for the dance after attending a Conneaut Sock Hop at the Conneaut Human Resources Center.

While some Ash/ Craft Industries clients just watched the festivities, many danced to the tunes from the 1950s. Some of the guys took on the dress of teenagers from more than a half century ago, complete with white T- shirts and even a few (empty) cigarette packs in the sleeves.

The building's cafeteria became the dance floor, adjacent to open windows that reflected the early-evening sun. A disc jockey played a variety of tunes for dancing and, for some, reminiscing. Inez Gaumer, a board member for a support group for Happy Hearts and Ash/ Craft Industries, said the organization sponsors five dances a year and she thought the change of pace to a sock hop worked well.

“We are going to have a Hula-Hoop contest,” Inez said of one of the attractions for the evening.

She said there were also door prizes for the best costumes. “They have been talking about it all day. This place is packed,” Bonnie Roosa said as people were arriving by bus, vans, and cars.

## Special Days

### Halloween

Happy Hearts students presented a program of songs for the Halloween season for their parents and other school members. A party and a dance later in the evening followed the program. November 3, 1976.



### Thanksgiving



*Happy Hearts School students and their adopted grandparents say grace before their Thanksgiving meal Tuesday. Betty Hartley's Intermediate Class began the program of adopting residents of the Ashtabula County Nursing Home located across the street from the school in the early fall of 1988.*

*The seniors visit weekly for games and help with classwork.*

*Joining the students were Jeanette Bates, second from left, Nellie Meyers, fourth from left, and Ruth Burke, third from right. In the back at right is class assistant Linda Walford. At right foreground is Marge Johnson who helps transport the seniors. Photo by Jeanne M. Hawkins, Jefferson Gazette. November 24, 1988*

## Christmas



*Santa Visits Happy Hearts  
United Commercial Travelers, Lake Shore  
Council 330, threw a Christmas party for  
Happy Hearts School on December 16, 1987,  
its 19th consecutive party for the school.  
Everyone sang Christmas carols and Santa  
brought a gift for everyone.  
Santa gives Katrina Miller a gift and pat on  
the head at the annual Christmas party at  
Happy Hearts School on December 14th.*



*Jeremy Weber with help from  
Molly MacCarthy, tests out the gift  
that Santa Clause gave him, a  
new pair of suspenders.*



*Happy Hearts teacher Elissa Bundy  
shares a book about Christmas with  
Megan Bailey during the party at the  
December 14, 1990, Christmas party.*



*Happy Hearts Sponsors  
Year End Carnival for  
Students, June 1988*

*In June 1988, the  
Ashtabula Exchange Club  
sponsored a carnival at  
Happy Hearts School. The  
year end event was a way  
to celebrate the end of the  
school year with rides,  
games, and a dance for  
all the students. Enjoying  
a spin on the Ferris wheel  
are Bob Stewart (left) and  
Frank Woodworth.  
Fund Raising at the June  
1991 Carnival  
Fundraiser. Happy  
Hearts School held a*

*fundraising carnival in June 1991. Funds from the carnival will be donated to the upcoming Special Olympics. The photo is by Nick Jezierny in the Ashtabula County Sentinel, June 3, 1991.*



*Safety Town and  
Balloon Launch at  
Happy Hearts  
Carnival June 6, 2003  
Happy Hearts  
children enjoyed face  
painting, music, and  
Safety Town at a  
carnival and balloon  
launch. Substitute  
teacher David Devine  
provided music for a  
sing-along in the gym*

*and Secretary Vicki Sylvester painted designs on the faces and arms of students. There were relay races and a baseball game and balloon lift off. Students sent red, white, and blue balloons with the names of their teachers and address of their school in the air, hoping for responses from people in faraway towns and cities. Teacher Cindy Osburn-Bucci said the carnival marked the end of the school year. Representatives from the Trivent Financial for Lutherans cooked a lunch of hot dogs and hamburgers for students and staff.*



## Chapter Ten: Happy Hearts and Ash/Craft People

Happy Hearts and Ash/Craft would not be possible without the children and adults working from the inside and outside to make them

work, much like tending pumpkins in the facility garden with love and care to make them grow into their full and fun bright orange potential. Here are just a few of the many people who tended the Happy Hearts and Ash/Craft growing garden.

### **Maxine Asuma, Workshop Specialist**

Holly Brown wrote a profile of Maxine Asuma, or “Mighty Mike, for the November 1987 issue of New Directions, the community newsletter for the Ashtabula County Board of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities.



“Mighty Mike,” as a coworker calls her, has a set routine to perform her job at Ash/Craft Industries. She sets up the job, assigns jobs to clients according to their individual skills, and performs practice runs with them. She supervises and constantly checks the progress of her clients as well as the finished product. And while she is efficiently doing the necessary things to make her job and clients successful, she adds caring and enthusiasm in large doses.

She loves her work group, describing them as fantastic. “It is so different from being a foreman in a factory. These people are eager to work. It is all I can do to keep up with them, they are so good!” she said. Originally from Nova Scotia, Maxine Asuma became a United States citizen shortly after she started working as a bus driver for Happy Hearts in 1971. After two years of bus driving, she resigned in 1973 because she believed that bus driving was not for her, but she returned as an instructor assistant in 1975 and worked in the Infant and Early Childhood Program at Happy Hearts. After some years at Happy Hearts, she insisted she would remain in the Ash/Craft Workshop, working with handicapped adults.

Max’s co-workers Linda Nicholas, Tom Harris, Linda Moroski, and Cassie Smith

share “Max” stories,” and agree that it would be difficult to find anyone who does not like “Mighty Mike.” They appreciate her dry wit and praise her ability with her group. They described her as a good sport, who is teased constantly about her freckles, her short stature, her accent, her escapades, and her expressions such as “Case closed.”

Max confided that she could hardly wait until the children she had in the Infant Stimulation Program graduated through Happy Hearts into the Ash/Craft Workshop. “There will be such a difference! Infant Stimulation was a real godsend to them. Just wait and see the difference!”



### **Dorothy Bishop, Trail Blazing Happy Hearts Teacher**

*As Acting Director of Happy Hearts School in the absence of Wayne Reese, Dorothy Bishop accepts a gift from Vivian Spangler, outgoing associate chairman of the Ashtabula County Board of Realtors. Mrs. Bishop said that the check would be used for small items which are not covered in the school budget. She thanked the Associate Relators and remarked that it was thoughtful of groups to*

*remember Happy Hearts School. Dorothy Bishop was one of the pioneer teachers at Happy Hearts School and as student enrollment increased so did the need for space. Happy Hearts opened its doors in various locations, including the Austinburg Grade School building where Dorothy Bishop began a 22-year teaching career with Happy Hearts. “I worked with the teenagers teaching them home skills. I loved them all and really enjoyed working with them.”*

### **Jean Fields, Ashtabula County Board of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities Member**

New Directions, Spring 1988

Jean Fields became a new member of the Ashtabula County Board of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities in 1988. She has been involved with the Happy Hearts program for 12 years as a member of ARC, Outreach, levy committees, festival communities and she has done a great deal of volunteer work in many areas of the program.

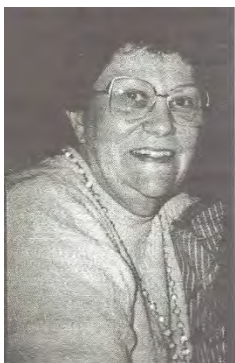
Jean and her husband Dave moved to Conneaut 34 years ago from Beaver Falls, Pennsylvania. They have eight children ranging in ages from 16 to 33 and being a parent of eight has taught Jean to prioritize and organize very effectively. She has a degree in Elementary Education and taught three years in Ambridge, Pa., where she received by circumstance and necessity on-the-job training in Special Education. Jean is currently active in her church, is a Trustee of the Conneaut Carnegie Library in charge of the used books program and is a founding member of the Conneaut Schools Academic Boosters. In her leisure time she enjoys reading and keeping scrapbooks for each of her children.

Jean sees her role as a Board Member as an extension of her active participation with and interest in the program. While she considers her knowledge of the Adult Program more limited than that of the school program, she feels confident that she recognizes the overall picture in terms of decision making.

Jean's introduction to the program was through a referral and subsequent visit by the School Nurse, Alyce Lange. Jean and Dave toured the school, were impressed by the atmosphere, and had good feelings about their son Andy's enrollment in the program. Jean always says that while she has often had concerns about the educations of her other children, she has never been concerned with Andy's because she feels that he is received an excellent and individualized education at Happy Hearts

Jean would like to see increased communication between the community and our program to help promote awareness of the problems that the MR/DD kids and parents face and to help clear up some of the misunderstandings that surfaced during the past levy campaign. As Jean, in her quiet, yet very determined way, states with a great deal of conviction, "No civilization is any better than the way it treats its weak, disabled, and elderly. No community will grow without taking into consideration the needs of this population."

### **Marian Flickinger**



New Directions, Fall 1995

During her career at Happy Hearts/Ash/Craft Marian Flickinger did not call attention to herself and would not allow an article about her until she retired in June.

According to the staff people who worked with her for years, Marian represented the professionalism and pride of her coworkers and for herself. She possessed a quiet dignity and respected the dignity of other people. She took pride in her work and in herself and a selfless desire to bring out the best in all of her co-workers.

She loved children and they loved her.

Whenever there was a job needed to be done, Marian always said, "I'll do it." After she did it, she never mentioned to anyone that she had completed the task, but it just quietly got done. Marian genuinely cares for other people and always was the first to appear when needed.

The article about Marian in *New Directions* said that "in Marian, our younger staff saw what pride and professionalism really mean in a world where it sometimes is hard to find, and they clearly appreciated it all. And those of us who have been around for a while were constantly reminded of why we are here and what life is all about."

### **Celebrating 38 Years of Friendship: Inez Gaumer's Interfaith Class for Retarded Citizens**



*Since 1969, the First Presbyterian Church on Park Avenue in Ashtabula has provided a unique ministry to the mentally retarded citizens of Ashtabula County through the Interfaith Religion Class with St. John High School. Happy Hearts Orff Band students demonstrate their playing for*

*the Interfaith Religion class instructors. From left, they are Julie Carr, Trevor Lundgren, Matt Newsome, Matt Evans, Nici Reynolds, Lisa Ray, Charles Smith, Kevin Ecklund, Madelin Esquivel, Lori Petrochello, Benjamin Sullivan, and Kristen Hague. March 31, 1990.*

At the beginning of the school year, Inez asked students to write a letter detailing their thoughts and expectations about the retarded people they would be interacting with all year. The following May she gave them the same assignment. Comparing the contents of both letters showed the students growing in understanding in insight about mentally handicapped people, changing their attitudes and often their lives. Inez said that seven or eight of the students she taught at St. John's religious education seminar went into special education as a career and the class was a good experience for all of them because some of them had never had any contact with people with disabilities.



The members of the First Presbyterian Church also gained an understanding of mentally retarded people. At least once a year, Friendship Class members joined the congregation for the worship service. The annual Christmas production also exposed them to the work that went on in the class.



*Inez Gaumer helps students John Pickett and Steve Hinkle find a Scripture. The class will be recognized on its 35<sup>th</sup> year during the worship 10:45 Sunday at First Presbyterian Church in Ashtabula. Ashtabula Star Beacon photo by Carl E. Feather.*

### **Betty Hartley- Teaching and Persevering with Happy Hearts**

A story about Happy Hearts teacher Betty Hartley, appeared in the Winter 1993 issue of New Directions, the community newsletter of the Ashtabula County Board of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities. The story said that Betty Hartley's colleagues described her as "determined." She is determined to acquire all of the resources an individual student needs. She is determined to provide the best help she can for family members. She is determined to be the most faithful and generous friend a person can have. She is determined to make every day the most beneficial and enjoyable for herself and the people around her.



The determination of Betty Hartley began with her growing up years in Ashtabula as an only child. She spent much of her youth babysitting cousins and children of neighbors and friends, at one point even caring for a handicapped cousin. She vividly remembered an aunt that doctors told that she had only six months to live and not much beyond that. At the sixth month, her aunt wanted to send the doctor an anniversary card. Betty admired her aunt's attitude.

These experiences with family and children helped Betty develop a love of children, coupled with a determination that the child care philosophy that her parents had instilled in her work were the principles that she would use throughout her life. Betty balanced her love of children with a belief that they must respect the authority of parents and teachers. Although she did not yet know it, she would also use these principles in future classrooms.

Although Betty had always enjoyed working with children, she focused her education and first job on social work, not education. Graduating from Mt. Union College in 1957 with an emphasis on psychology and a degree in sociology, Betty took a job in Illinois as house mother at Methodist Children's home. For six years she worked with troubled children who were headed for reform school, and then she decided she needed a change in employment and location.

Returning to Ashtabula to visit her parents and decide where to apply for her next position, Betty brought her determination with her. Florida had seemed like a place for her to job hunt, but on a whim (even determined people have whims!) she went to the Friendly Employment Agency in Ashtabula. The people at Friendly Employment told Betty that the Happy Hearts School for Retarded Children in Kingsville needed a teacher.

Her determination immediately asserted itself and Betty told the Friendly Employment counselors that her training was in sociology and psychology, not education. She firmly told them that she did not want to be a teacher. The Friendly Employment counselors met determination with determination. "We've scheduled you for an interview at Happy Hearts," they told Betty.

"I don't want to be a teacher," Betty told Happy Hearts principal G. Thomas Graf.

Principal Graf sent Betty home with an application, and he called her two weeks later to ask why she had not returned it. When he offered Betty the job, she asked him if she were the only one who applied for it. He told her there were three applicants, but he wanted her. She asked him why he choose her and he said the magic words. "You have a love of children and a desire to work with children, and that makes you the most qualified candidate. I have other candidates, but you are the one I want."

Wavering in her determination not to be a teacher, Betty accepted Principal Graf's offer, and he hired her as a primary teacher for the 1964-1965 school year. At this time, Happy Hearts School had 48 students, a staff of four teachers, two assistants, and four bus drivers and classes were held in the basement of the Ashtabula County Children's Home. Betty still was not completely convinced that teaching suited her.

In 1994, the year she retired on June 14, Ashtabula Star Beacon Life Styles editor Carl E. Feather, wrote a story about Betty and her teaching career at Happy Hearts that he titled, "The Job Betty Didn't Want." After she reluctantly accepted the teaching job at Happy Hearts, Betty quickly discovered how much she wanted it. She said her attitude toward the job changed when she met Ted Hattery who eventually became a client at Ash/Craft Industries. She recalled that Ted came in for testing before school started and after she met him she realized that he and his fellow students were children with problems and special needs, but children. "He allayed any fears I had" she said.

In a complete about face, Betty turned her determination not to be a teacher into determination to be the very best teacher she could be. Losing fourteen pounds in the first month of her job, she gained her teaching philosophy and a love for her job. Her philosophy: "You take children where they are when you get them and you stimulate them, challenge them, and try to figure out how to get them as far as they can go. The staff are all like that. I would stack this staff up with any staff anywhere. Those who are here now and those who have left are all wonderful and talented." Her love affair with her job lasted for the next thirty years. "I took the job and fell in love with it," Betty said. "I went back to college at Syracuse University for three summers so I could keep it."

From 1964 until the 1985-1986 school year, Betty taught in the primary section and then she transferred to the Intermediate Class. Throughout her career, she returned to school to maintain her certification and keep up with the changes in the special education field. When G. Thomas Graf, the principal who had hired her accepted a job in Atlanta, she considered going to Atlanta as well, but decided she had to stay around to see the new Happy Hearts School building which was dedicated in November 1968.

Throughout her teaching career Betty has learned to adjust her teaching methods to the particular needs of her students, including taking advantage of field trips to teach language, math, and consumer skills. Taking her students on field trips to places like restaurants and museums gives them practical experience in socializing and navigating their way through the often-confusing rules for public and private behavior. She also uses the obituary pages of the newspaper, spending 45 minutes every day going through the paper with the students. They always stop at the obituary pages to read the names and ages of the deceased and gauge the length of the obituaries. "I tell them that the obituary is a very important because every person is valuable, no matter what they did in life. They are still valuable because they were a person."

All of her teaching methods tie in to what Betty hopes her students will learn in her classroom. She realizes that many of them will never be able to read or understand math, but she strives to ensure that each student will leave with basic survival skills and appreciation for their gifts and the gifts of others. “I want them to be the best they can be. I want them to achieve to the highest of their potential.”

### **Aili Hokkanen, Happy Hearts Art Teacher**

Born in Wakefield, Michigan, on March 29, 1914, Aili Hokkanen was the only child of John and Maria Hokkanen. The Hokkanen’s moved to Ashtabula when Aili was a small child and they soon became active in Bethany Lutheran Church. When Aili grew older, she became a member of the Bethany Women and sang in the choir for many years.

After graduating from Harbor High School in 1932, Aili went to Cosmetology School, earned a beauty license, and opened a beauty shop in her home. She enjoyed working in the salon, but she decided to take college classes to earn a BA degree in Education.

In 1967, she became the art teacher at Happy Hearts School, a position that complimented her love of children and her zeal to help them learn art skills. Her colleagues and Happy Hearts parents said that she could teach her pupils to make crafts from scraps of almost any material. In 1974, Aili took on the task of teaching an adult class at Ash/Craft workshop and she retired from that position in 1979.

During the years she taught art, she earned her bachelor’s degree in art from Lake Erie College in 1976. Her paintings, especially scenes from the Ashtabula area, are exquisite. Aili’s hobbies included animals, painting, and people. She liked people and people in turn were charmed by her warm, kind, and giving personality. She especially loved cats and always fed those fortunate enough to meow at her door.

## Alyce Lange, Happy Hearts Nurse

*Happy Hearts students Mindy Lewis, 7, of Dorset and Martin Smith, 4, of Ashtabula, share a smile with Alyce Lange who is retiring from her position as a school nurse. Lange retired last week after 20 years of service to Happy Hearts School, during which time she was instrumental in developing the health services department. Ashtabula Star Beacon photo by Warren Dillaway.*



An article in the spring 1988 issue of *New Directions*, the monthly newsletter of the Ashtabula County Board of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities announced the retirement of School Nurse Alyce Lange on March 31, 1988. An integral part of the program for nearly 20 years, Alyce Lange symbolizes the growth of the Happy Hearts and Ash/Craft program and the exceptional caring that contributed to its foundations and growth.

A native of Oil City, Pennsylvania, born into a close and loving family, Alyce knew at an early age that she wanted to be a nurse. When she was five, Alyce's father died and her mother somehow managed to keep her family of three girls and two boys together. She struggled through much adversity, but managed to feed her children and provide loving support in their growing up years. Her mother's loving support helped Alyce realize her dream of becoming a nurse. Alyce began her nurse's training in Oil City and Chicago, and then she went to Rock Island, Illinois to earn her B.S. in Nursing. Next, she went to Trumbull Memorial Hospital in Warren, where she taught for eight years.

While she was teaching one quarter at the Kent State Ashtabula Branch, Alyce took her students on a field trip to Happy Hearts School, then located in the basement of the old Ashtabula County Children's Home. There she met Superintendent Wayne Reese and Happy Hearts students, marking a new chapter in her life. Alyce had lunch with Superintendent Reese who told her that he was looking for a nurse for the summer. When Alyce told him she was interested in the job, Superintendent Reese jumped up from the table and ran to get application forms. She filled them out, and growing more excited about the job, she dressed and drove several miles to mail the application. In June 1968, Superintendent Reese hired Alyce to be the summer nurse and by August 1968 she was a full-time employee traveling to family homes to evaluate children as well as helping Happy

Hearts move to its new location in Kingsville.

Nurse Alyce Lange developed the health services department at Happy Hearts and served as school nurse for the past 13 years. She quickly points out that the Health Services Program also involves promotion of the School's educational goals.

She reports that she saw the health services program grow from ninety-six children and adults in the combined Happy Hearts and Ash/Craft program to 130 Happy Hearts students and 230 Ash/Craft clients in 1988. "The health services program is a very important part of the program. I can recall many incidents where I was able to observe behavior and notice that it might relate to some sort of health problem," she said. One time she noticed the symptoms of a severe thyroid imbalance with weight fluctuations and frequent crying spells. She said the school was able to avoid a severe thyroid crisis on several occasions by being alert.

Many of the students are at a greater health risk than "normal" students because of multiple conditions and high susceptibility to heart and respiratory ailments that may lead to shorter life spans. "It puts you on edge. Every time I got called, I prayed that I would know what to do for the child," Miss Lange said.

Through the years Nurse Lange's life became interwoven with Happy Hearts School. She worked daily to address the problems of children, parents, and staff, being gentle or firm or both as the situation required. Her gentle manner could become ferociously protective if "that's what was required to help a child!"

Miss Lange shared the happy times as part of helping in the growth and development of the children and parents. She stood as a solid rock during the sad times when a child died and she had to put her own feelings aside to be strong for the parents. She stood as a trusted friend for the staff, always willing to listen to problems, to tickle their senses of humor on gloomy days, and to share caring and concern. "There were good times and bad times, happy and sad times – they usually balanced out. One cannot let one's own feelings enter in because we must help the parents. When you lose a student it is hard to take, but you know the parent is really hurting."

Alyce, who has had more than her share of physical difficulties to overcome in recent years, has concentrated her efforts on the children and their parents. She says, "Through the years I have learned how these children can love, without hiding under a mask of indifference. They give so freely of life that it just flows."

After she retires, Alyce said she plans to continue her involvement with Happy Hearts and continue with her hobbies of reading, traveling, church activities, gardening, crocheting, needlework, embroidery, sewing, painting by the number

and Braille. She has been Braille for the Lutheran Church, Missouri Synod, transcribing Sunday School lessons on an ongoing basis for the past 12 years. She plans to submit a Braille manuscript to the Library of Congress to earn her certificate. She also plans to spend more time with her family.

Alyce Lange says that during her twenty years of working at the school “my faith gave me the strength for my work and my work strengthened my faith. I thank the Lord for my privilege of touching the lives of God’s special children and for the opportunity to make a difference at a significant time in someone’s life.”

### **Tony Masters: The Details Make the Difference**

(From a story in *New Directions*, Fall, 1993)

When Happy Hearts and Ash/Craft people wanted to describe something absolutely, spotlessly, clean, they say that it is “a Tony Master’s floor.” Tony’s dedication to detail and perfection is easy to detect in his conversation and actions. A three-dollar General Electric watt-miser fluorescent bulb costs more than the one-dollar fluorescent in the catalogue, but he uses them and can show you how he is saving you money. He uses his chart of each classroom to demonstrate how many bulbs were changed in that room since the 1980s. “This room has needed only three new bulbs in over ten years. This other room had the cheaper bulbs when I came and they lasted only a year or two. I switched to the watt-misers and have not had to replace one yet,” he said.

Do not get the wrong idea. Tony is not all about money and savings. He knows people and tries to give them what they need. He knows that this woman likes the



soft-white, fluorescent bulbs in her office, so he tries to get them for her because she says that the others are too harsh and hurt her eyes.

Tony bypasses the bargain paper towels and toilet paper because he thinks they are too rough for the younger children at Happy Hearts. “I buy the softer kind. It is not that much more.”

The Ohio Department of Education Preschool Licensure inspector recently called Tony’s building one of the cleanest schools he had seen. The State Fire Marshall, during his annual inspection called it “a joy to walk through.” People constantly ask, “How old is this building?”

These comments praise a building that daily accommodates multi-handicapped

children, many in wheelchairs. It backdrops children learning to eat on their own and use restrooms independently. Yet, a visitor from another school plaintively asks, “Why doesn’t my building look like this?”

The answer is they do not have Tony Masters and his pride in his work. Pride makes Tony’s floor the shiniest of the shiny. Pride motivates Tony to weld the seat back on the classroom desk so the school would not have to replace “a perfectly good desk.” Pride drives Tony to stay after hours to finish a job or come in early to clear snow before buses arrive. The answer is Tony’s determination that he does only his best work, a practice that makes it easier for everyone else to do their job.

Tony’s beginning to gaze at and briefly mention retirement. He is thinking that he will tinker with his old cars and putter around the farm. He has set Happy Hearts into a time frame, but he will work to fill it with deeds and accomplishments. That back door needs painting and the smoke detectors need to be vacuumed. Like he always says, the details make the difference.

### **Gene Moroski, Founding Parent**

Born in 1927 in a farmhouse in Monroe Township, Gene Moroski has been an Ashtabula County Resident his entire life. His father died when he was two years old, and he was raised by his grandparents in Conneaut. At the age of seven, he lost an eye to a freak childhood accident, and the fact that he wore a glass prosthesis played sports or the military not an option in his life. He immersed himself in music, which is an avocation that he still enjoys today, at the age of 91.

Gene married Nadine in the mid-1940's, and their first son Larry was born on March 13, 1947. At first the doctor would not let them see the baby, and later advised them that he had Down’s Syndrome, clubbed feet, and a serious digestive blockage. After Larry went through several surgeries and leg castings, the doctors advised the Moroskis to just keep him home and make him comfortable, as he would probably not live to be more than 13 years old. As an alternative, the doctors suggested sending Larry to a state institution, which was the norm at this time. Gene visited one in the Columbus facilities, and determined that his son would never live in these conditions.

Gene and Nadine were also referred to a Doctor in Pittsburgh who claimed that he could use colored lights and a fancy machine to rewire the brain of a disabled individual. On the way home from that appointment, they tearfully realized that that they had to find another path for Larry in the way of some form of education and training. Nadine saw an ad in the Ashtabula Star Beacon asking if there were any parents of disabled children interested in meeting to try to establish some



educational facilities for their children. He and Nadine and several other parents met in March 1954, and decided to start a school for handicapped children.

After a long and challenging journey through red tape, financial problems, and plain hard work, Gene, Nadine, and the other parents established Happy Hearts School. During this journey, Gene discovered that State Aid was available at the time, but he and the other founding parents needed local signatures from county agencies to apply for this money. Gene and other parents spent two years giving talks and speeches to every church, social, and ladies' group in the county before they could get the necessary signatures for the State Aid. This became the beginning of Happy Hearts School, and its 60-year history.

Gene and Nadine's son Larry grew up in Happy Hearts School and worked at Ash/Craft during his adult life. Larry Moroski died on March 15, 2010, two days after his 65th birthday.

His father Gene said, "Because of Happy Hearts and Ash/Craft, we know that our DD individuals can live happy productive lives outside of an institution."

### **Nadine Moroski, One of the Happy Hearts Founders**

Nadine Moroski, one of the founders of Happy Hearts School died on September 15, 2017, at age 90. According to those who knew her, Happy Hearts would not have opened its doors in 1955, without Nadine Moroski. When Nadine and her first husband Gene Moroski's son Larry was born with Down's Syndrome, they looked for help in Ashtabula and they found no services for developmentally disabled people.

Nadine and Gene Moroski went to the state level to find help for their son, but doctors and other medical personnel told them that the only options for Larry were keeping him at home or putting him in an institution. Nadine and Gene and five other couples with developmentally disabled children worked together to start Happy Hearts.

In the 1950s and 1960s, Nadine held the office of treasurer and served as a board member of the Retarded Citizens of Ashtabula County, now known as ARC. Over sixty years later at age 90, Nadine still participated in Happy Hearts School activities.

Ann Zeitler, superintendent of Happy Hearts School, who has known Nadine Moroski since 1978, characterized her as "kind, thoughtful, helpful, and generous." She said that in the almost 40 years she knew Nadine she always supported Happy Hearts School, and before Nadine, "there was nothing here for children or adults

with developmental disabilities.”

“Nadine not only helped start Happy Hearts, but she helped hire teachers, raise funds, and provide donations to support the school. She never lost her interest in helping people with developmental disabilities. One of her sons received services here, which naturally kept her interest high, but she remained a supporter for a long time after he passed away. She attended every Happy Hearts School graduation I can remember,” Superintendent Zeitler added.

Ellen Kolman of Ashtabula said that Nadine and Gene Moroski were pivotal in assuring a relatively independent life for her 24-year-old Autistic son Kevin. “If it had not been for the creation of Happy Hearts, my son might not have as independent a life as he does right now,” she said. “The founders of Happy Hearts were directly responsible for helping many children with disabilities.”

She said her son now works at Ash/Craft Industries. “As a grateful parent, all I can say is Nadine Moroski remained dedicated to helping children with disabilities until the day she died,” she said. “It was her lifelong mission.”

Wendy Flickinger, Habilitation Manager of Ashcraft Industries, said Nadine Moroski was not only instrumental in starting Happy Hearts School, she was also supportive of Ash/Craft Industries, which provides a work environment for adults with developmental disabilities. “She would come in every week, very nicely dressed, to drop off donations,” she said.

Lisa Palinkas, the Moroski’s granddaughter, said that especially in the 1950s, her grandmother and grandfather were “passionate about providing opportunities for children with Down’s Syndrome, Autism, and other developmental disabilities. She said she wants to make sure to preserve her grandmother’s legacy. “There are scrapbooks detailing everything she did and we want to archive it all,” she said. “She was a truly great person.”

## **Linda Nichols**

New Directions, Fall 1994

Linda Nichols remembers when there were nineteen individuals in the Ash/Craft



program. “I started here in 1968, 26 years ago. I would like to think I did make a difference in people’s lives by what I do. I certainly try to!” she says.

I enjoy my job. I enjoy the people I work with. I enjoy the staff at Ash/Craft and I have worked there for twenty-six years because every day is different. the people, the job, the challenge of each day makes Ash/Craft special.”

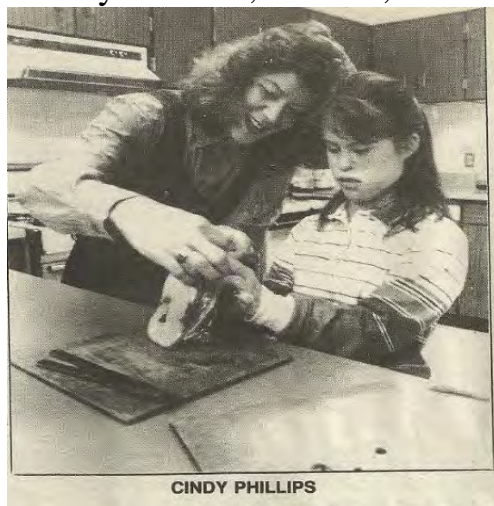
Linda seems to enjoy people and enjoy life. When you enjoy life, you cannot help but pass this on to other people. For 26 years she has passed this on to literally hundreds of other people, both as a work supervisor and as a co-worker and we have all been made a bit richer for the experience.

What was going on with the nineteen workers at Ash/Craft in 1968? We had one job, says Linda. We put advertising labels on Esquire Magazines and delivered them to local doctor’s offices. one job, but it kept us busy. How things have changed in twenty-six years

## **Cindy Phillips, Teacher, Acting Principal, Principal**

Cynthia Phillips: A Breath of Fresh Air

The Positive Side, Ashtabula County Public Education Employees; Ashtabula County Sentinel, June 25, 1990



Ashtabula- Her fellow staff members describe her as “a breath of fresh air everywhere she goes.” “The most dynamic, energetic teacher I have ever seen,” and “one of the classiest people there is - anywhere.”

Talking about herself, Cindy Phillips simply says that she loves to teach and wishes she could give more to her students. Her students do indeed need more at times since they are all developmentally or multi- handicapped. She has continued to give to the students at Happy

Hearts School for nine years, and abundantly.

Cindy has taught pre-school children; Intermediate students (12-16); and Advanced students (16- 21) for the past nine years and she also spent just over a year as acting principal at Happy Hearts School in 1988-89.

Currently, the Advanced Student Department has developed a job and community curriculum which has already enhanced the potential for these students to enter the job market and make them better prepared for more independent community living.

As one of four teachers in that department, her time, and efforts this school year have been focused on that goal. She is also currently completing her master's degree from Cleveland State University in school administration, with an immediate goal of moving into that phase of school services.

### **Barb Turchetta's Intermediate Class Scrapbook- 1991-1994**

Barb's Thank-you's

To William – for such strong arms. You will be a big help to whoever you encounter.

To Matt- for your good behavior. You helped me so much this year.

To Beth- for teaching me sign language and for being so nice to me and everyone else.

To Bob- for helping me with manual labor. You were always there when I needed you.

To Charlie – for giving me a hard time! It taught me not to be so bossy.

To Jane- for helping and working on the computer. You are a good helper.

To Rob- for being a leader in academics. You shined, your reading, math, and your athletic ability.

### **Poems**

Jane Good.  
I like telephones  
Telephones ringing in my ear  
Ear listening to mom and dad.

I like spaghetti Spaghetti cooking in pan  
Pan bubbling on the stove.

Nick Marsh

I like pizza

Pizza growing on a pan Pan big and round  
On the stove.

October 3, 1991, Barb Turchetta

These poems were written by Barb Turchetta's 12-15-year-old students at Happy Hearts School who have multi-handicaps. Barb said: "they are "wonderful" for the ability level of these students and am excited to share them with you for possible publication."

Rob Decaro I like basketball

Basketball bouncing in Hoop,

Hoop shaking in the air.

Matt Mucci

I love pizza

Mixing in a

bowl,

Bowl round

and big

Mom cooks

pizza

I love Mom.

Renee Barnard

I like sandwiches,

Sandwiches piled high with roast beef,

onions, cheese, tomato, lettuce

MMMMMM....Good.

June 3, 1991

Picnic at Good's.

We went to Jane Good's house. We rode in a blue van. Mrs. Higley drove the van. We ate hot dogs, potato chips, applesauce, potato salad, macaroni salad, baked beans and for dessert we had strawberry jello cake. We climbed in the tree house. We played in the sand. We made bubble pictures. We played ball. We had fun.

Friday March 18, 1994, Ashtabula Star Beacon

The following are poems called cinquains. They were written by students attending Happy Hearts School. A cinquain is a type of poem wherein a single word is chosen as a title, two words describing the title follow and three action words come next. The fourth line describes the poets feeling regarding the topic and the fifth line repeats the title.

Basketball  
Speedy, jumpy,  
Shooting baskets backwards  
Feels great making points.  
Basketball.  
Jamie Smock, Ashtabula

Candy.  
Sweet, good.  
Share, eat, give.  
Eating it is happiness.  
Candy  
Amy Maddox, Ashtabula

Pizza  
Round, cheesy  
I ate it!  
Feels warm and good.  
Pizza.  
Dan Hunt, Conneaut

Snow  
Cold, soft  
Like making angels.  
Feel full of energy.  
Snow.  
David Baker, Ashtabula

Josh,  
Gentle, peaceful.  
Smiles at me.  
I feel warm inside.  
Josh.  
Nick M.

Bulldozer.  
Big, red,  
Digging in the dirt,  
Proud to drive it.  
Bulldozer.  
Jeremy Weber, Ashtabula

Flowers.  
Pretty, happy,  
pick, give, smell.  
Flowers make Mom happy.  
Flowers.  
B., Ashtabula

Love.  
Valentine's Day, happy.  
Hug, shake hands, surprise.  
Love makes me feel excited.  
Love.  
Hans Stoltz, Geneva

### **Anne Zeitler, Board Superintendent**

Anne M. Zeitler, Superintendent of the Ashtabula County Board of Developmental Disabilities, is the sixth superintendent and the first female superintendent in the history of the Ashtabula County Board of Developmental Disabilities.

Originally from Columbiana, Ohio, she graduated from Crestview High School in 1974 and earned a Bachelor of Science in Education from Bowling Green State University in 1978. Continuing her education, she earned a Master of Education from Cleveland State University and received her administrative licenses from Youngstown State University. She is a 1998 LEADERship Ashtabula County Graduate.

Even as a child, Anne knew that she wanted work with children, growing up empathizing with them and always wanting to help them learn and have fun

Anne had acquired a strong background working with children with developmental disabilities and after she graduated from Bowling Green State University, she was hoping to be able to locate a job that would allow her to pursue her passion of helping children overcome difficulties, achieve milestones, and enjoy their lives to the fullest. She interviewed for the adapted physical education instructor position opening at Happy Hearts School, got the job, and began working at Happy Hearts School in September 1978, teaching adaptive physical education. She coordinated the Special Olympics program, coached track and field, basketball, and cross-county skiing, and taught at Happy Hearts School for nine years.

In 1987, Anne accepted a position as program coordinator for a residential facility acting upon a strong desire to begin working with adults with developmental disabilities. In 1988, she returned to the Ashtabula County Board of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities and began working at Ash/Craft Industries as a Vocational Evaluator. In 1998, she became the Principal of Happy Hearts School and in 2002, she was offered and accepted the position of Board Superintendent.

Over the past 40 years, Anne has had the privilege of witnessing many miracles and working with hundreds of children and adults with developmental disabilities.

She has developed long-lasting professional relationships with the children she began working with at Happy Hearts School who are now prosperous, happy adults enjoying their lives to the fullest.

She considers herself blessed to have had the opportunity to work with and learn from many dedicated and determined colleagues and employees who have shared her devotion to making a difference in the lives of others. She considers it an honor to be a part of the services that have been provided to infants/toddlers, students, and adults with developmental disabilities over the lifetime of her career with the Ashtabula County Board of Developmental Disabilities.

## Blue Notes

### White Motor Corporation Hosts Happy Hearts Scouts



*The Happy Hearts Boy Scout Troop made a tomahawk and presented it to White Motor Corporation officials when they visited the company on June 24. Adults pictured in the photo include W.L. Peterson (left), president of White Motor; A.C. Schliewen, (third from left), vice president of manufacturing; Joseph Urban, Scoutmaster; Frank Barrett, Assistant Scoutmaster; and Don Lucha, executive, Northeast Council.*

“Someday in the not too far future, the White Motor Corporation will be employing men like you,” A.C. Schliewen, vice president of manufacturing promised the Happy Hearts Boy Scouts as they sat in the executive conference room near the end of the special Happy Hearts Boy Scout Day at White Motor in Cleveland June 24, 1973.

The special all-day tour was arranged by the executive management team of the company when they were informed that a White employee, Joseph Urban, Jefferson, was the Scoutmaster for the group of boys from Happy Hearts School for six years. Mr. Urban’s position was originally pointed out in the United Auto Workers newspaper, the Right Angle, as a human interest item. Mr. Urban has worked at the plant as a tool and dye maker for 31 years.



## Chapter 11: People Power



*Sharing and Caring.*

*Patrick Watts, left, lends a helping hand to his new friend Bobbie Reidl, as they share the experience of caring. Ashtabula Star Beacon photo.*

## Ash/Craft Workers of the Month, Year

Workshop specialists at Ash/Craft Industries nominate a worker out of their work groups to be worker of the month, and the production manager and the director of adult services pick the worker of the month and then, the worker of the year. The



winner receives a certificate and a bonus and the worker of the year also receives a plaque with their name engraved on it.

*November 1981. Winners of worker of the month at Ash/Craft Industries include (left to right) Mike Sabados, Julie Morse, Virginia Soliday and Otis McMillon. Larry Korland,*

*Adult Services Director congratulates the employees. A dance for the employees followed the presentation. Photo by Pat Brink.*



*Kim Covert, 1981, Ash/Craft Worker of the Year*



*Paul Connors, 1984 Ash/Craft Worker of the Year*

*Ash/Craft Industries Worker of the Year Paul Connors of Conneaut (center) was honored in ceremonies at Ash/Craft Industries Friday. Shown left to right are Larry Korland, director of Ash/Craft; Grace Connors, Paul's mother; Paul Connors, Paul's father and Reverend William Offutt, chairman of the*

*board for Ash/Craft. Paul Connors from Conneaut has worked at Ash/Craft since 1967. Photo by Robert Higgs. April 2, 1984.*

### **Susan Eaton, Worker of the Year**



*Worker of the Year. Receiving the worker of the year award for Ash/Craft is Susan Eaton, center. Presenting Susan with a \$50.00 check and awards are Michael Parmigian, second shift production manager, left, and Ken Wiegand, first shift production manager. Susan works in the industrial sewing department at Ash/Craft. Photo by Scot Fagerstrom.*

### **Mary Licate, 1987 Worker of the Year**

For the past ten years that Mary has worked at Ash/Craft, she has won several Worker of the Month awards and also received a proclamation from Senator Robert Boggs and the Ohio State Senate.

Her Workshop Specialists point out her superior work speed and the amount of quality work she produces. She is skilled in sewing on commercial sewing machines and expertly performs numerous inspection jobs. “Mary is considered a total asset to Ash/Craft Industries and represents the very best qualities of the Ash/Craft work force, and its value to the community,” the Ash/Craft community newsletter story said. Donna Cleveland, Workshop Specialist wrote the story.



### **Karen Miller, 1988 Worker of the Year**

*Top Worker Honored. Karen Miller (left) has been named as the Ash/Craft Worker of the Year. Karen and her supervisor, Ruth Freidstrom, collate industrial manuals. March 19 1988. Ashtabula Star Beacon photo by Jim Matthews*

## **Jeffrey Spencer, 1990 Worker of the Year**

On August 27, 1990, the Ashtabula Sentinel reported that Ash/Craft industries had chosen Jeffrey Spencer as its Employee of the Year. The Employee of the Year is nominated from the group of winners of the employee of the month of the previous year.

Jeff's Workshop Specialists said that "Jeff has been in the workshop program since August of 1980. He has been very successful in many areas of work, and for the past two years he has been working in the transportation department washing and cleaning the buses that transport the other workers to Ash/Craft."

## **Luis Rivera, 1991 Ash/Craft Worker of the Year**



*Ash/Craft Employee of the Year Luis Rivera (second from left) was recently named Ash/Craft Industries Employee of the Year. A resident of Rome Township, he has been an employee of Ash/Craft since 1977. Celebrating with Rivera is (from left) supervisor Nancy*

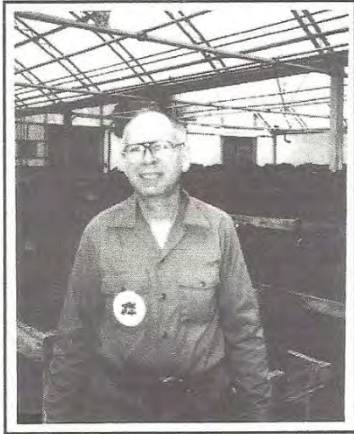
*White; Rivera's mother Modesta Marquez; board member Elva Roux; (standing from left) board member Bob Norton and Ash/Craft director Larry Korland. August 26, 1991. Ashtabula Star Beacon photo by Joyce Buell.*



## **1992 Worker of the Year, Herbie McAvoy**

Larry Korland presenting Herbie McAvoy Worker of the Year, 1992.

## Jerry Russell, 1996 Worker of the Year



Jerry Russell, 48, who has worked in the Ash/Craft Greenhouse for 15 years, was chosen as the 1996 Worker of the Year. His workshop specialist said that he cheerfully does any job he is asked to do, and he can move from job to job and do them well.

The activities Jerry likes to do best include planting flowers in the Ash/Craft Greenhouse, going to dinner and attending church, drawing, and celebrating Christmas, his favorite time of the year. He lives in a residential home with seven other men and helps with

the household chores at home.

## Working in the Community

About Completeness... Paul Conner

by Russell Grippi

New Directions, Winter 1988

It took a while, but Mrs. Grace Conner's long years of planning and dreaming that her son Paul would someday hold a "regular" job in the community were realized when he began employment at Orlando Brother's Golden Dawn in Conneaut on October 9, 1986.

Paul is 40 years old and a product of Happy Hearts School and Ash/Craft Industries. He was a good student, learning the self-help and socialization skills so important to the Happy Hearts curriculum. After his graduation in 1971, Paul entered the sheltered workshop program at Ash/Craft. For 15 years, he "stuck to it," applying his talents, working as an assembler on general production. Paul also was taught woodworking skills in the woodshop. He operated drill presses and a variety of tools in the manufacture of wood products. All these jobs were done with great pride of accomplishment and to the fullest satisfaction of his supervisors.

Paul was indeed one of Ash/Craft's best workers. However, something was not complete in his life. You see, from the outset of his education and training, Paul was placed in a very sheltered and protected environment. This, however, was not the case in his life outside Ash/Craft. He lived at home with his parents in Conneaut and enjoyed the freedom of socializing with neighbors and friends and of

coming and going about the community as any adult. He frequented local restaurants, was an accomplished bowler and member of a local bowling team. He enjoyed golfing, shooting pool, and sharing a beer on occasion with the “guys” at Pape’s Restaurant.

Yes, Paul led an active life...an active life for any adult...but something was not complete!

When Paul was a young boy, Mrs. Connors set high expectations for him. “We treated him just as we treated our other children. He was included in all family activities and expected to carry his fair share of helping with chores around the house.” Paul, through his mother’s persistence, was the first person with mental retardation to receive the Sacrament of Holy Communion at his church. He participated in neighborhood activities just like other boys. He cut grass for neighbors and during winter months, shoveled their snow. Paul was always kind, always thoughtful and considerate.

During mid-1986, a new program called “Community Employment,” was developed at Ash/Craft. The Community Employment representative, Troy Bailey, quickly enrolled Paul in the Program and worked toward finding him a community job. Paul’s skills and desire for competitive employment were obvious. Joe and Ron Orlando, co-owners of Orlando Brothers Golden dawn store were convinced by Mr. Bailey to give Paul a chance. The rest his history.

Paul now works full-time and has earned the respect of all his co-workers. He participates in the store’s social activities, attending the store Christmas party and participating in the gift exchange. On the day of the last Super Bowl, Paul invited a group of friends from work to his home to watch the game. In preparation for their visit, he went grocery shopping with his mom.

Perhaps one of the nicest things to come of the experience is the feeling of “completeness” within Paul and his family. Admittedly, Paul’s dad had a hard time dealing with the fact that his son was mentally retarded. For many years it was difficult for father and son to communicate or develop a close relationship. Things have now changed. Paul and his dad have developed a deep bond of friendship. They golf together, have vacationed in Florida, and even enjoy a good game of pool once in a while. As the other children have grown and left home, so too, has Paul grown. He carries his fair share of the responsibilities of the household and takes great pride in buying items of furniture for all to use. He also contributes money for room and board.

Needless to say, Paul's mom has realized her dream. Her many years of hard work, patience, love, and caring clearly were worth the effort. She is so very proud of Paul and happy that his life is approaching completeness.

As to Paul's success on the job, the Orlando Brothers unequivocally believe Paul to be one of their best employees. "Wish we had ten more just like him. Paul is just like one of our family," said Ron Orlando recently.

Hats off to Joe and Ron Orlando for believing in Paul and giving him the opportunity to succeed. It has truly been a "WIN-WIN" situation for everyone.

### **Ash/Craft Trains Jerry Kangas for the Future**

March 8, 1992

Jerry Kangas is twenty-four. He went through Happy Hearts School and now enjoys working at Ash/Craft.

Jerry's many abilities include material handling, heat sealing and heat wrapping, and he is already making plans for the time when he will work outside in the community. "Well, I've got two things on my mind; one is to be a janitor anywhere and the other is a material handler," he said. "It is a lot of work and I love to work hard. It makes me feel good."

Jerry lives at home with his family and a German shepherd named Sheeba, which is his responsibility.

Jan Church, workshop supervisor, said Jerry is a hard worker who has great potential to succeed in the outside workplace. "He's going to make someone a good employee someday," he said.

Church said her job is twofold: She wants to teach the workers as many job skills as she can and build their confidence and self-esteem. Ash/Craft has deadlines, quotas, and high standards for quality work. "We do put out quality work here. One thing people do not realize is that we are a full-scale business, not crafts. I am teaching job skills. The most important goal is that my people could someday work in the community. I have some excellent workers!"

## Ash/Craft, Spire Partner Provide Opportunities

July 15, 2017



*Ash/Craft workers Josh McGuire (right) and Jaye Wight (middle) begin tidying and mopping the restrooms Thursday at the Spire Institute's Aquatic Center, while Ashtabula County Board of Developmental Disabilities on-site supervisor A.J. Petro (left) looks on. Ashtabula Star Beacon Photo by Justin Dennis.*

Eileen Luebking vividly remembers the day when doctors told her that her son Josh McGuire would never be able to talk and they recommended that he be institutionalized.

Last week she proudly stepped through the door he held for her as she watched him get to work at the Spire Institute in Harpersfield Township. "Welcome to the Aquatic Center," Josh said in the sober tone that makes his mother grin.

Josh traveled through an early nonverbal phase of his autism, but his years at Happy Hearts School enabled him to talk and develop practical skills. After he graduated from Happy Hearts, he went to work at Ash/Craft Industries. Now he's one of three Ash/Craft janitors who maintain the Spire Athletic facility part time through the week. He helps replace toiletries, empties trash, mops, and performs other maintenance chores.

Jan Church, Ash/Craft Community Employment Specialist, said the workshop can bring as many as thirty-five workers when Spire hosts a large sporting event. According to Jan, one such event sparked Ash/Craft's partnership with the Spire Institute when its usual contractors canceled the last minute and she scrambled to form a janitorial team under the pressure of a deadline. "Ever since then, our partnership with Spire has been phenomenal. It has given so many opportunities to people from Ash/Craft to go out into the community and what a great place to be in, too. They get to see the athletes, talk to the athletes, and everyone is positive



with us,” she said.

Contradicting the doctor’s dire predictions of his inability to talk, Josh has several words to say about his job. “I like to work as a team, working together and helping out each other with any tasks that they need done,” he said. “I feel like it’s a nationwide thing for us to help each other with just making sure everybody is neat and safe.”

His mother Eileen said that her son has had several community placement jobs since he started at Ash/Craft, but his job at Spire has grown his sense of responsibility and pride. “She lets her pride in her son shine in her words. “Josh does better here than anywhere else,” she said. “He sets his alarm by himself now. I do not have to get him up. He packs his own lunch. He is on the spot.” She says that Josh is a solemn perfectionist who enjoys the punctuality and the routine of his regular Monday, Thursday, and Saturday schedule. He’s rarely late and does not call in sick much either.

“I have to be there. It is my responsibility,” Josh says.

“Sometimes he gets a gleam in his eye and a smile. That is rare for Josh because he is so serious. He just loves it,” Eileen says.

A.J. Petro, Ash/Crafts on-site supervisor, has also watched Josh McGuire grow into a confident person since he started his Spire job. “He has really taken ownership. He takes great pride in what he does,” she said. According to Supervisor Petro, Josh and the other Ash/Craft workers make minimum wage at Spire, but unlike the usual temporary jobs, the consistent community placement is in itself worth much more. “Many businesses in the community are not ready or confident enough to accept the challenge of developmentally disabled employees. “It takes a lot of time and energy on the company’s part to be willing to make that commitment,” she said.

## Blue Note

### Cinquain

Snow

Cold, soft

Like making angels.

Feel full of energy.

Snow.

David Baker, Ashtabula



## Happy Hearts – the First Steps on Life’s Stairway of Possibilities

Let us have a party with paper shreds, Throw paper knowledge in our heads!

### **Ricarda (Nici) Reynolds Gets Her Wheels 1985**

Sometime in 1985, Happy Hearts Physical Therapist Debbie Hills and Sandy Reynolds, the mother of 13-year-old Ricarda (Nici) Reynolds who has cerebral palsy, had a conversation. Debbie wanted to make sure that Nici’s mother approved of her plan of getting an electric wheelchair for Nici and that her family supported the idea. She had to be certain that Sandy Reynolds and her family could make the necessary adaptations to her home to accommodate the electric wheel chair.

Sandy Reynolds welcomed the idea of an electric wheelchair for her daughter and assured Debbie she would help get her daughter wheels. Debbie Hills began what turned out to be a nearly two-year project to get the federal Medicaid system to approve and authorize purchasing a wheel chair for Nici.

Finally, Nici settled into her new electric wheelchair which propelled her into the world of opening doors and also opening vocational opportunity for her. At school, Nici can deliver messages and notes throughout the school. She can move around the classroom and her school building to interact with her teachers and peers. She can visit her friends. All of these new opportunities helped Nici develop her self-esteem and confidence and move ahead in her personal development. Her wheels have opened the road to future opportunities for her.

### Blue Note

Pizza

Round, cheesy

I ate it!

Feels warm and good.

Pizza.

Dan Hunt, Conneau

## Growing Up Happy Hearts: Megan Bailey

**Megan Bailey examines her gift from Santa during the 1987 Happy Hearts Christmas party.**



Megan Bailey, 7, receives a gift from Santa Claus during a Christmas party at Happy Hearts School on December 22, 1994.

*March 5, 1995. Happy Hearts primary students went roller skating at Kings Roller Rink in North Kingsville with some*

*assistance from Conneaut JOGs classes and volunteers Megan Bailey has some trouble balancing on her wheels, but Chris Covert helps her land softly. Jim Mathews, Star Beacon photograph.*



*Prom Royalty, May 12, 2009, Prom King Adam Henson, and Prom Queen Megan Bailey. Students from Conneaut High School sponsored the party. Warren Dillaway took the photo for the Ashtabula Star Beacon.*



*May 28, 2009. The Happy Hearts School 2009 graduates are back row, left to right, Michael Bailey Jr.; Robert Seaton; Adam Henson; and Nicole Lambert. Front row left to right Kyle Lawver and Megan Bailey.*

## **Student of the Month Ashtabula County Sentinel**

Kingsville...If help is what you need, you can count on Michael Zajac, a 20-year-old work- study student who was elected as “Student of the Month,” by the Ashtabula Exchange Club. With an almost perfect attendance record, Mike exhibits the qualities of a caring, dedicated worker who strives for excellence on the job at Happy Hearts School.

One of eight children, Mike is a native of Niles, Ohio, where he attended Fairhaven School until he transferred to Happy Hearts last September after the death of his father. He presently resides in Kingsville with one of his brothers, his sister-in-law, and their two children.

In only seven months, Michael has adjusted well to his new environments and has learned to do a thorough job all work study tasks assigned to him. He also works as a teacher’s aide in one of the primary classrooms and serves as a “sales rep” for the print shop recently initiated by the work study group.

Because he shares so willingly of his time and talents. Mike will be greatly missed by both teachers and classmates when he graduates this coming May. We also thank the Ashtabula Exchange Club for giving Mike this honor.

## **Happy Hearts is Helping Fred March 1992**

Fred’s mother, Janet, talks about the difference Happy Hearts has made in his life. “We were lucky we had Fred when infant therapy was just starting,” she said. His family is impressed with his reading and math, but most appreciative of the improvement in his communication skills through speech therapy at Happy Hearts.

His mother Janet said, “The thing I appreciate the most is being able to communicate with him. When he used to come from school, he did not volunteer information about his day or activities, whereas now, he is more open and able to communicate his thoughts.”

This ability to communicate has allowed Fred and his family to develop their relationships more fully. Fred has taught his family many things in return. “I think the things I’ve learned from him are just an appreciation of the little

accomplishments he has done,” Janet said. Janet said disabled people sometimes get negative reactions from the public because people do not understand them. She believes it is good for mentally retarded and developmentally disabled people to be a part of the community.

## **Early Invention at Happy Hearts**

Monday March 14, 2006

The Early Intervention program at Happy Hearts provides services and referrals even before a child is born. The goal is to provide assessment and intervention so children with developmental issues can move into either a tradition public school program or one of the Happy Hearts satellite programs in public school districts “The earlier we can catch children, the better we can serve them,” says Happy Hearts Director of Education Michael DeMarino.

“By getting them early they may not be delayed by their disabilities later on,” Bonnie Bashaw, an Early Intervention specialist said. Bonnie Bashaw is a 16-year veteran of special education and works with the Help Me Grow System, a program for Ohio’s expectant parents, newborn infants, and toddlers that provides health and developmental services. The goal is to help these children start school healthy and ready to learn.

Every week Bonnie Bashaw spends about three ½ days in the classroom and one ½ days on the road working in the homes of clients. Many of the home-bound students are medically fragile and can’t attend school. Her classroom-based students receive two hours of instruction twice a week. “I run a fairly structured room,” she says as she and her assistant Darlene Stough help three students work with gobs of Play Dough. The play helps develop motor skills, eye-hand coordination, attention spans and language. Consistent, scheduled play time helps give structure to the program. “They need to know what’s going to come next so they can relax and learn better,” Bonnie said.

Developing a child’s communication skills is a key aspect of the work that Bonnie Bashaw and Darlene Stough do with the children. They teach basic sign language skills at the outset. The first two signs the children learn are “more” and “please.” Then you do the two words together, “more please” Darlene said.

“It gives the children some quick success with language,” Bonnie adds. “The kids will naturally drop the signs and use language when they are ready.”

A key to the success of the Early Intervention program is parental involvement.

Bonnie says they are constantly updated on the child's progress and they are involved in helping that child overcome developmental delays.

“We see what the child is doing and what they need to work on next,” says Leslie Skidmore, an Early Intervention Specialist. “We provide the family with activities and strategies to incorporate into their everyday lives. We try to break the skills down into little manageable pieces the family can work on step by step.”

Leslie spends three days a week providing EI services in the home.

Marilyn Miller and her assistant Abbey Fazekas teach one of the two Happy Hearts preschool classes. Like Bonnie Bashaw and Leslie Skidmore, Marilyn Miller also spends a day on the road doing home visits with parents. The preschool classroom is unique because, in addition to the eight students allowed by law, there are three “typical” students who do not need Happy Hearts services. Their parents pay a small fee for them to attend preschool where they provide socialization and a catalyst for age-appropriate activities.

Miller has been teaching for 24 years. It is a tough assignment, given the high energy level and wide range of issues and needs represented in the population entrusted to her. “We try to work one-on-one as much as we can,” she says as several of the children swarm around her. “But there is never enough of us, we all keep busy. You can have one hundred hands, but sometimes it is still not enough.”

After breakfast, the children head to a classroom where Marilyn sits in a rocking chair with the children gathered around her in a circle. Students sign in by placing a card with their name and picture in a slot on the blackboard. Then Miller leads them through exercises that help them learn the day of the week, dates, counting and the calendar. These kinds of activities are repeated in other classrooms where students are drilled on the day of the week, the date, the weather, and seasons. Education Director Mike DeMarino says these are practical functional ways to present academic subjects like mathematics, science, language, and social studies that the Ohio Department of Education requires the school to teach.

#### Practical skills



James Kiser, a teacher in the advanced classroom, helps Vincent Fuller with a page of math problems.

On the other side of the school, James Kiser's advanced students start their day

working on a variety to tasks under his supervision. As with the other students, their day starts with breakfast in the cafeteria. Back in their classroom, each student tackles a different assignment. “You have so many different learning levels in each room, James says. “It is a lot different from the normal education setting where everybody gets taught the same thing all day.

Ashley Kenyon was given a worksheet on which she had to write letters. That was followed by a sheet of math problems to do with a calculator. Michael Bailey practiced sorting tasks, one of the jobs at the workshop. “It’s all hands-on, physically modeling, simulating jobs,” James says. Students are motivated by the praise of their teachers and the promise of rewards. For one student, this means a short nap. For another, it’s a chance to browse through a stack of magazines.

Street and door signs students are likely to encounter in the real world are posted all over the classroom windows. Students are tested daily on word recognition using flash cards. Every day they are in class, the students are drilled on words like “hospital,” “911”, “railroad crossing,” “police,” “private,” and “elevator.”

Someday Michael may have a full-time job at Ash/Craft where these skills will help him earn a paycheck. It’s Jim’s job to make sure Michael and his other seven students will function at his highest possible level when at the age of 22, he enters the world.

#### Blue Note

#### Happy Hearts and Ash/Craft Bus Safety Rules:

“Hands Up for Bus Safety.”

Be quiet at railroad crossings.

Sit down when the bus is moving.

Look three ways before crossing the street.

Keep the aisle clear to the emergency door.

Good behavior is best.

## Special Story: Students Write Across Schools Pen Pals Unite



*Photo by Carl E. Feather, Ashtabula Star Beacon. After writing each other many months, students at Happy Hearts School and Kingsville Elementary met for the first time on Friday and spent the school day together.*

1993

After writing to each other from separate schools for about five months, students at Happy Hearts School, a school for students with learning and developmental disabilities, and Kingsville Elementary met for the first time Friday and spent the school day together. Since about December, seven fifth grade students from Kingsville Elementary School and seven students from the Intermediate Class at Happy Hearts School have been writing back and forth to each other. On Friday, these students met each other for the first time at the Happy Hearts classroom and spent the day together both learning and playing with each other.

Barb Turchetta, who teaches the Intermediate Class and her assistant Cindy McCall, helped the students write the letters. The letters are a way for the students from both the schools to learn writing and reading skills as well as social skills. "I try to make education as functional as possible," Barb said. "I try to let them use their academic skills in everyday life. For instance, learning to read and write in the context of letters to other children."

Although meeting someone for the first time can be an intimidating experience, the students from both the classes warmed up to each other and overcame their shyness relatively quickly.

Barb said that it is normal to fear something that is different and sometimes children without handicaps can be frightened by children and people with handicaps. Spending time with people different than they are helps people accept and understand that everyone is different and to a certain extent all people have some sort of a handicap



“When someone is different from us, whether they are black or white or fat or thin, or have handicaps, we tend to be afraid of each other and avoid each other. Why is that?” Teacher Turchetta asked the class.

One of the students pointed out that people are sometimes afraid of things they are unaccustomed to and do not understand.

Teacher Turchetta said that teaching a heterogenous class which brings together children with or without handicaps in one classroom has been a dream of hers for a long time.

She believes that bringing different kinds of children together in a classroom helps the children learn to understand and accept people different than themselves. Heterogenous learning only works when cooperative skills such as helping others learn are stressed in a classroom, she added.

Sometimes teachers are afraid the kids will not accept other children, but when you bring the kids together, they see that these are kids too and they are not afraid anymore and they do not laugh at them, she explained.

According to Barb, the state is advocating more transitioning in the primary grades of children with or without handicaps at any early age. Children with handicaps will not be automatically separated from other children if they are able to function in the schools. She thinks that this is good for the child with a handicap and the other children in the class because it will teach them acceptance. “They will accept them because it will be a way of life for them,” she said.

There is a tendency for people to forget that children and people with handicaps are individuals who have specialized talents and personalities, she said. There is so much that all people can learn from those people who have handicaps. People need to open their minds to what they can learn from someone else. “People sometimes think that because kids are handicapped they don’t have individual abilities and talents,” Barb said. “But they do each have something to offer. Some of them are better on the computer. Others are better at writing. And they learn to help each other with these skills.”

## Chapter Twelve: Happy Hearts and Ash/Craft People at Work



*What's Cooking at Happy Heart's School? Pizzaburgers, Yummmm! New Directions, Winter 1992 by Sue Lillie, and Linda Porcello*

*Joyce Stasko and Lorraine Bean cook delicious meals in the Happy Hearts cafeteria. Photo by Doug Mead.*

As you turn down the hall of Happy Hearts School and walk toward the cafeteria, you can smell the aroma of pizza burgers, a favorite of both students and staff at the school. Thoughts come in mind about Joyce Stasko and Lorraine Bean, the two unique individuals who are responsible for all of the food prepared and served every school day.



In order to work in the cafeteria of any school you must really love to cook. You just also love children. This is especially true if you are preparing meals for approximately one hundred children and staff daily. But to work in the atmosphere of handicapped and disabled children AND cook, you must be very talented and be a special person as well.

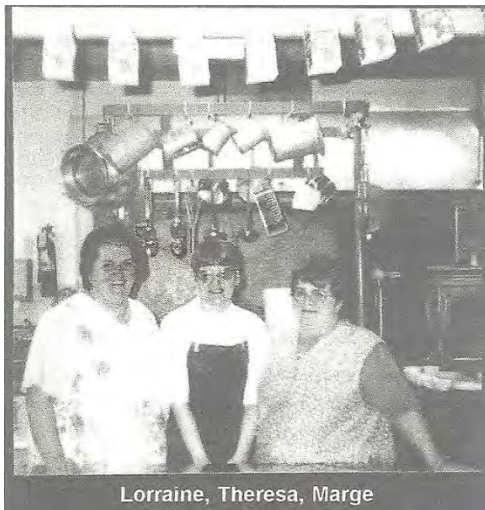
In addition to cooking skills, Joyce and Lorraine have a great deal of knowledge about diets and nutrition. Because of the special needs of the handicapped students, special diets are the norm. Many students at Happy Hearts School cannot tolerate milk or eggs. Some need their food pureed or chopped. Some have diabetes. Some have to count every calorie so that one food might have to be substituted for another, depending on the individual child. Joyce and Lorraine are always making

special accommodations for students and staff. Just one example is when a field trip is planned for a class and a student does not bring a lunch they will whip one together. No child goes without lunch!

Cooks have to be bookkeepers, too. Part of their duties include ordering, taking inventory, making up monthly menus, and keeping records of free, reduce, and paid lunches.

Joyce and Lorraine participate in a job training program for students, too, Students in the advanced class learn all about the kitchen process. Joyce and Lorraine say they could not get along without their student help. “The skills our students learn are often used in jobs in the community. One former student who was trained to work in the kitchen at Happy hearts School now works at the truck stop in Kingsville,” they say proudly.

Most of all, they are experienced cooks who do their job with pride and honor. They are greatly appreciated by students and staff alike!



### **Follow Your Nose to These Happy Hearts Cooks**

*Lorraine Bean (right) Marge Lemmo, and Theresa Spang are waiting for you in the Happy Hearts Cafeteria.*

**Happy Hearts Cooks**

by Patti Davis, bus driver New Directions, 2000

It is not hard finding Lorraine Bean, Marge Lemmo or Theresa Spang during the hours of 7:00 a.m. through 1:30 p.m. Monday through Friday, from August through June. All one needs to do is enter our Happy Hearts School and follow your sense of smell and the aroma fills the halls to the cafeteria area where these ladies work to make sure that no one leaves school daily without a nice full stomach. These ladies are our Cafeteria staff. Lorraine has been working in the school kitchen since 1986. Theresa comes to us as a graduate of Happy Hearts School and employee at Ash/craft Industries to being hired full time for the past five years. Marge has been cooking professionally for many years and we are lucky to have her now working with us since 1998.

It does not take long to see that these three ladies all have various jobs to do and

little time to complete them, so they all work together very well. You can see that they take their job seriously and yet really love what they are doing. Breakfast begins at 7:00 a.m. sharp and Lorraine and Marge begin preparing this meal together; however, halfway through breakfast, one of them has to begin preparing for lunch. On most days fifty breakfasts are served. Theresa does the entire kitchen clean up so the cooks always have a clean and sanitary working area. Lunch usually begins at 11:00 a.m. with the first class coming to the cafeteria area. The last class is served at 11:45 a.m. and 55 lunches are served daily. This is a full day's job with no down time for the ladies that work in the cafeteria. While interviewing the ladies (while they were cooking, of course!) I found out the following information:

2 oz. of protein/meat or fish

Three services of grain (rice or pasta)

1 cup of vegetables or fruit – ½ cup vegetables and fruit usually is used Bread/butter/crackers

8 oz. milk

Lorraine says that some of the students require special menus due to their inability to chew or because of allergies to certain foods. The needs of these students are taken into consideration daily. All of the components that normally go into the daily menu are either pureed or alterations are made for substitutions. The most common allergies are those to orange juice, corn, or sugar.

Three classes eat in their own classrooms daily. These classes eat “Family Style” and this food is also prepared by the cafeteria staff. All three of these classes are Early Childhood (children 3 to 5 years of age).

The menu for the month is prepared in advance and our cafeteria staff will take requests as input to their making up of the meals as long as they are within the guidelines of the State requirements.

All dairy products are ordered from Dairymen's in Cleveland, with milk being delivered twice weekly. All bread products are ordered from Schweibles in Erie, Pennsylvania, again delivered twice weekly. All meat is ordered from Maplevale Farm in New York. All produce is ordered locally from Mike's Farm Market in Ashtabula and delivered once a week. Northern Haserot out of Cleveland is used for all other inventory needed.

I asked the ladies about dessert, knowing that Marge is famous in this area and they all smiled and said if time permits they add this to the menu, and on special

occasions always an extra touch is added. At Thanksgiving time, a full meal is prepared for the students and they are permitted to have their family members join them for this special lunch. This is done several times a year as something a little extra that these ladies do for the children and their families.

Upon leaving the cafeteria, I asked several students what was their favorite meal and they all said, “Macaroni and Cheese.” I also asked the staff and they also agreed. When I asked the kitchen ladies what was their secret, they looked at each other and began to laugh. They all said at the same time, GOVERNMENT CHEESE!”

## Ash/Craft Greenhouse Gazing

*Workers of the Ash/Craft Division of Happy Hearts School arrange potted plants for display in their greenhouse in Kingsville. They offer a wide variety of plants on Mondays and Wednesdays from 2:30 to 3:30 p.m. Assisting in the arranging are (left) Kim Covert, Danny Brunell, and instructor John Buchtinec. 1960s*



### **Business is Blooming at Ash/Craft Greenhouse**



*Richard Stewart (left) and Beth Fogle work at the Ash/Craft Industries Greenhouse. Ashtabula Star Beacon photo by Warren Dillaway.*

by Ellen Kolman, Ashtabula Star Beacon April 28, 2008.

Business is beginning to bloom at Ash/Craft Greenhouses, part of Ash/Craft Industries, 5959

Green Road.

“Plant kindness every day” is the slogan posted on a crossbeam inside the

greenhouse completely filled with lush, flowering plants. While gorgeous foliage is not unique to greenhouses, what makes this greenhouse so special are the workers, known officially as consumers, due to their MR/DD (Mental Retardation/Developmental Disability) status as verified and defined by the state of Ohio.

Ash/Craft Industries is a non-profit organization that serves the MR/DD adult population with vocational and social skills training, sheltered workshop, community job training and placement services, and an adult day activity program, said Lynda Perry, who is the director of adult services.

“We have great support from the community in the greenhouse, every year it gets better,” Linda said. “We have customers that have been coming for more than 20 years; we appreciate the support very much.”

There are fourteen consumers working in the greenhouse and they complete a variety of jobs, depending on their individual skill level, said Park Mukina, who has been the greenhouse production manager for 12 years.

“Our consumers range in ages from 23 to 60-years old and they all have individualized plans,” Park said. “They have to be able to interact appropriately around the public and we give them a try to see how they do.”

The jobs at the greenhouse include planting plugs, transplanting, watering, fertilizing, removing bad foliage, carrying items to cars for customers and assisting customers.

This year we are trying something new with a couple of our consumers. We are giving them a chance to serve in the retail end with job coaches,” Director of Adult Services Perry said.

“Being around growing things is always a pleasant, peaceful place to work,” Park Mukina said. “It is very satisfying to watch the consumers doing a good job and they are very happy and successful doing it.”

What will customers find at the Ash/Craft Greenhouse this year?

Annuals by the flat, including ageratum, balsam, forget-me-nots, impatiens, pansy, zinnias and much more. Assorted perennials including butterfly bush, catmint, daisy rose red, sandwort, and more.

Assorted herbs including cilantro, Italian basil, Italian parsley, oregano, rosemary, sage, and thyme.

Assorted vegetables, including tomatoes in varieties of big boy, cherry, early girl, and yellow pear; cucumber, buttercup squash, summer squash and zucchini;

peppers in varieties of California wonder and Hungarian hot.

The greenhouse also has available geraniums in colors of red, pink, lilac, salmon, violet, white and ivy; as well as specialty items like hanging baskets, window boxes, urns, combo pots in five different sizes, hanging bags, saddle bags and moonflowers in one-gallon pots.

“Marcia Palm is the supervisor in the greenhouse and she goes above and beyond to make sure we have a successful year and that the consumers as successful and participating to the best of their ability Park Mukina said.

“I have the best job. I love my people and running the greenhouse,” Marcia Palm said.

### **Ash/Craft Workers Add Special Touch to New Greenhouse**



*There is a new greenhouse and store front at Ash/Craft on Green Road in Kingsville. Left to right are Eddie Cook, Beth Fogle, Sam Riggs, Tiffany Mordarski, Hans Stoltz, Tammy Shaw, and Lee Shultz. Ashtabula Star Beacon photo by Bill West.*

March 3, 2009

Tiffany Mordarski loves everything about her job at the Ash/Craft Greenhouse. “I like to work with the plants and flowers, and I carry flowers out to the customer’s car,” Tiffany said.

She has worked at the greenhouse for five years. Ash/Craft Greenhouse is part of Ash/Craft Industries, located on Green Road in Kingsville, and “Plant Kindness Every Day” is the slogan posted at the entrance of the new Ash/Craft Greenhouse and Garden Shop located just south of the Ash/Craft Industries building.

Growing foliage is not unique to greenhouses this time of year, but what makes this greenhouse so special are the workers like Tiffany, known officially as consumers, because of their MR/DD (Mental retardation/developmental disability) status as

verified and defined by the state of Ohio. Ash/Craft Industries is a non-profit organization that serves the MR/DD adult population with vocational and social skill training, sheltered work shop, community job training and placement services and an adult day activity program with Lynda Perry, who is the director of adult services. “We have great support from the community in the greenhouse. Every year it gets better,” Lynda said.

This spring season customers will have something new to peruse and purchase arts and crafts made by consumers along with unique garden décor and gifts in the new greenhouse shop, and more vegetable plants, hanging baskets, and flowers to choose from in the new larger, greenhouse for their gardens.

“We moved the greenhouse so we can have room for expansion. Now we will be able to offer gift items and seasonal plants all year,” Lynda said. “I am so excited.” Ash/Craft will have a display at the 2009 Ashtabula County Home Show this weekend and will offer a preview of what is new and coming at the Ash/Craft Greenhouse and Garden Shop.



Happy Hearts and Ash/Craft Help Them Discover Themselves

*November 11, 1962. These members of the Happy Hearts School for Retarded Children are doing their share for charity. Teachers Mrs. Margaret Dunkin and Mrs. Jean Allds supervise their students stuffing envelopes with Christmas Seals to be sold for charity work at a later date. Ashtabula Star Beacon photo.*





*Planning the special program to be held at the Happy Hearts School on “Understanding Mental Retardation” are (left) Miss Alyce Lange, Geneva, president of the Ashtabula County Teachers of Trainable Retarded; and Mrs. Marta Triozzi, Ashtabula, chairman of the professional growth committee.*



*Early Workshop Days B.A. – Before Ash/Craft*

*Margaret Dunkin, director of the Goodwill Happy Hearts Workshop, teaches reupholstering methods to students. She spends her time teaching them trades which they might step into when they reach twenty-one. Ashtabula Star Beacon photo.*

## **Sheltered Workshop Provides 170 Jobs**

by Warren Dillaway

For almost forty years, Dan Custead, 60, has been coming to work five days a week, 12 months a year. Dan works at Ash/Craft Sheltered Workshop where

clients perform a variety of stages of assembly and packaging jobs. The adult services program provides employment and habilitation to more than 250 Ashtabula County residents. Some people in the program work in the community at Thomas Fence Company or the Ashtabula Mall, said Ash/Craft Industries director Lynda Perry. The facility operates in conjunction with a nonprofit board and the Board of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities.

According to background information that Lynda Perry provided, “Ash/Craft Industries as we know of it today began in 1967 with the change in state legislation establishing county boards of mental retardation.” She said the legislation also mandated creation of non-profit advisory boards to employ and pay mentally retarded adults in a sheltered workshop setting. A small training center previously existed from 1963 to 1967 in Jefferson and then moved to the new Happy Hearts School in 1968.

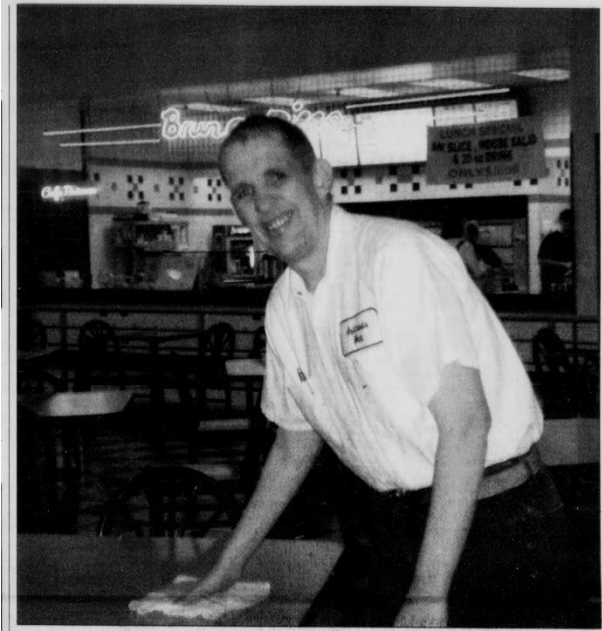
The background literature continues the history of Ash/Craft when it states that the size of the program “grew steadily between 1968 and 1975,” when a Stevens Road greenhouse was built. In March of 1978, the 20,000-square foot Ash/Craft Industries building was completed. “We have a total of 170 employees in the workshop,” Lynda said. She described some of the jobs at Ash/Craft. Each week clients assemble 250,000 jewelry boxes, and a variety of other small assembly-type projects are done for clients who contract with Ash/Craft to perform work for them.

Park Mukina who came to Ash/Craft Industries from the private sector, has been a workshop production manager for 10 years and he tries to maintain as close as possible a work environment found in a regular workplace. “What surprised me was all the same problems that confronted me in the private section, I found here,” but he said he believes that the Ash/Craft workers have a greater appreciation for their jobs and tend to cooperate more with co-workers.

He added that the workers (clients) are paid at a piece rate related to their ability and they contribute payroll taxes and provide income to their families. “They need that money to survive. They are living with elderly parents,” he said about some workers.

Marcia Palm, Workshop Specialist in the Ash/Craft Industries greenhouse, said she loves almost everything about her job. “I love my folks. They are like family. We really get along well. We look for the good in each other. They really do a wonderful job,” she said.

## Ron Cole Not Sheltered After 17 Years at Mall



*November 10, 2009. Ron Cole has been keeping things clean at the Ashtabula Towne Square since it opened. Ashtabula Star Beacon photo by Jamie Davis.*

He was a pioneer when it comes to working outside of Ash/Craft

by Tom Harris  
for the Star Beacon

There was excitement everywhere when the Ashtabula Mall – now Ashtabula Towne Square- opened in 1992. No one was more excited about the Mall’s opening than Ron Cole. And, it could be, no one was more apprehensive about it than Ron Cole. The day the mall opened. Ron Cole’s name went on the payroll. Then in his early thirty’s, Ron had worked in the Ash/Craft Industries Sheltered Workshop since graduating from Happy Hearts School. He was living in a large residential facility where he had resided since his teenage years after spending several years at Apple Creek State Hospital.

“Ron was scared to death when he started at the mall,” Ashtabula County Board of Developmental Disabilities Community Employment Specialist Jan Church said. “He was just so nervous. He was always on the verge of panicking.”

Seventeen years later, Ron Cole is still wiping tables and mopping up spills in the food court. The list of mall employees who can match his longevity is very very short.

“Now he is the face of the mall,” Ashtabula County Board of Developmental Disabilities Community Employment Specialist Debbie Nelson said. Debbie was also there when the mall opened. Working for Goodwill Industries at the time, she was Ron’s job coach. In her job with the ACBDD, she continues to provide support for Ron and other ACBDD consumers working in the community.

“We always try to match people with the best chance of success at the available job,” ACBDD Adult Services Director Lynda Perry said. “Still, you just never know how it will work out. But Ron just blossomed in this job.”

Ron’s life is now filled with all the mundane things that occupy the lives of most people. He shares an apartment with three roommates, he commutes to work on public transportation, and he punches a time clock when he gets there. Some of the everyday tasks were harder to learn than others and he still receives support from the ACBDD and his residential provider, but most of the tasks are second nature to him now.

“I have to get our cart ready when I come in,” Ron said. “Then I bus tables, sweep, pick up stuff off the floor and mop up spills.”

Debbie makes sure Ron gets his work schedule.

“Me,” Ron said when asked who arranged his transportation. “And I pack my own lunch.”

“Ron knows exactly what he needs to be doing in the job,” Lynda said. “He is just so dependable. He is there every day. I cannot recall the last time he called off.”

“Ron has been good for the mall and the mall has been good for Ron,” Jan Church said. “Ron is still a man of few words, but if a shopper has a question he will answer it if he knows the answer. And if he does not know the answer he will point the shopper toward someone who does. “He just loves his job,” Jan Church said. “He is always smiling. He knows everything that goes on at the mall and he knows the other employees and a lot of the regular shoppers.”

Ron is a seasoned veteran now and he looks like one going about his job in the food court. When he started his job 17 years ago, Ron was something of a pioneer, Community jobs for ACBDD consumers were very rare in the early 1990s. Now forty or so consumers work outside the Ash/Craft Workshop. Some, like Ron Cole, work directly for their employers. Others work in enclaves, remaining employees of Ash/Craft, but working at the outside company’s site under the supervision of ACBDD community employment specialists. “The mall opened a lot of doors for us,” Lynda Perry said. “People were able to see our consumers working, and that they could do the work just as well as anyone else. And of course, our consumers had a chance to talk to people and make friends.”

”Community employment begins with the ACBDD assessing the consumer’s

abilities and matching him or her with an available job. Once on the job, an ACBDD job coach trains the consumer in his new job. As the consumer learns the job, the job coach fades into the background. Eventually, the job coach comes in just once a week to check with the consumer and the employer. The job coach works to make sure little problems or misunderstandings do not become major issues. If the consumer experiences difficulties with some aspects of the job or if the job duties change, the job coach returns to do the necessary training.

“People with disabilities do so many things. They have various talents and abilities just like everyone else,” Lynda Perry said. “Our goal is to help them achieve the best they can achieve.

To help them do that we provide the necessary experts along the way. We’ve built good relationships with employers. They know that we provide quality employees and if a match is not working, it is not working and we move on from there.”

“Ron has seen a lot of people come and go at the mall,” Jan Church said. “It’s hard to imagine he ever worked at Ash/Craft.

## Blue Note

### Ashtabula County Board of Developmental Disabilities Board Members

1967-2018

Nancy Alexander-----Pamela Baker-----James Barnes ---- Rosemary Bernat =====Delores Bonds

Richard Bryant-----Miriam Cartner-----Bernadette Cimorelli-----Ron Colby-----

Mary Ellen Coneglio-----Don Cosner-----Ronald Cramer ----- Rev. John Cuthbert

Kristene DeCaro-----Lisa Ebersole-----Dora Ferritto-----Thomas Ferritto-----Jean Fields

Jeffrey Ford-----Larry Foreman-----Inez Gaumer-----Thomas Gwilt-----Liisa Hake

Douglas Hedberg-----Mary Ellen Higley-----Brett Horvath ----- Joseph Hunter

Judge Calvin Hutchins-----Dr. Edward James-----Charles Jeffords ----- Nancy Koski

Biddiana Kohowski-----Father Daniel Kulesa-----Edward Lawler ----- John Lovas

Joseph Lovas-----David Lusk-----Elaine Martin-----Barbara McClure-----Andrew Misiak=====Nancy Mohrmann-----Chris Newcomb-----Janet Neville -----Claude Nicholson

Jerry Peterson-----Margaret Pratt-----Kim Ryel-----Lisa Scott ----- William Searcy

Elizabeth Sims-----Ron Tate-----Robert Taylor-----Charles Thomas-----Victor Topo

Janet Vettel-----Charles Von Tesmar ----- Donald Zeller

## Special Story

### A Cooperative Learning Experience Between the Students of Happy Hearts School and Ashtabula Catholic Middle School

April 1995

Notes from the teachers

The initial idea of having a cooperative learning experience between Happy Hearts School and Ashtabula Catholic was the brainchild of Jodi Fowler, a teacher at Happy Hearts, who in turn called me to see if Ashtabula Catholic Middle School would be interested in a joint learning experience. With both schools eager to participate in such an experience, organization meetings began, creative juices were flowing and the energy and enthusiasm were high. The name of this learning experience became “Come and Journey With Me,” taken from the song written by David Haas that we were teaching the students.

None of this could have happened without the support and encouragement of our principals, Sister Mary Laurel Smith, H.M., and Mary Ellen Higley. Teachers involved are Jodi Fowler, Molly Matthews, Elissa Bundy, and Cindy Sowery from Happy Hearts and Angela Ackley and Marilou McClimans from Ashtabula Catholic Middle School.

The “journey” is just beginning. Thank you for sharing your children with us; they are finally here! After weeks of preparation, the students from Happy Hearts arrived at Ashtabula Catholic Middle School.

The day started out with our special friends arriving at about 12:30. They went directly to the library where they paired up with fifth grade friends. They began their visit with a tour of the library, Miss McClimon’s room, Miss Ackley’s room and the Gym. They divided into two groups and went their separate ways. The group that I went with went to Miss Ackley’s room where they listened to a story called “The Plant Pet,” by Elise Primavera. They then had the opportunity to make their own plant pet and they seemed to enjoy that!

They again moved, but this time they went to Miss McClimon’s room and planted flowers in milk cartons. When they were finished they cleaned up their messes –

that is, with a little help! Next, they listened to a song called “Everything Grows,” sung by Raffi.

The students ended their day by returning to Miss Ackley’s room where they heard the song “Come and Journey With Me,” while the fifth graders played the bells. They will hear this song every time they visit. The students returned to the library, where they got their coats and left. All in all, it was a fun day for everyone. A.M.T.

### Blue Note

Come and Journey with Me

By David Haas

Come to the song, come to the dance,  
Bring all you are, And all you can be.  
Come with your voice, come with your heart.  
Come and journey with Me.  
Come and journey with Me.

Come let the sun fill up your eyes.  
Take the time to look around,  
And love, just love, & walk with each other,  
Come and journey with Me. Come and journey with Me.

Come and see, come and be.  
Be all you are and all you can be,  
And leave all behind and calm your mind.  
Come and journey with Me.  
Come and journey with Me.

## Chapter Thirteen: Happy Hearts Music: Orff and Other Melodies



*Music played an important part in the home and school lives of Happy Hearts students. Several classroom teachers interwove music into their curriculum. Over the years, Happy Hearts students sang in choirs and performed in school programs. Many students developed a knowledge and appreciation of music by listening to the popular songs of the day.*



*Some people believed that special needs students and Ash/Craft workers could not fully appreciate music much less perform it. Happy Hearts students and teacher Michael DeMarino proved them wrong!*



Sing,  
Sing a  
Song



*The combined Advanced Classes perform "Sing A Song," by the Carpenters at a Happy Hearts spring music program.*

*Sing, sing a song,*

*Sing aloud, sing out strong, Sing of good things, not bad, Sing out happy, not sad, Sing, sing a song,*

*Make it simple, to last your whole life long, Do not worry that it's not good enough, For anyone else to hear, Just sing, sing a song.*

As often happens, the musical journeys of Michael DeMarino and the Happy Hearts Orff players began with simple songs, songs like "Sing A Song" by the Carpenters and "Camptown Races" by Stephen Foster, simple elemental songs. The story of the Orff Band and other music at Happy Hearts School holds more

complicated twists and turns, but rests on a simple truth: music is for everyone who wants to explore it, including special needs children. It can be combined with movement, dance, speech, and play. “Special needs children can learn music and perform and the process can be fun and still be music education,” Mike firmly believes.

According to Carl Orff, a German composer, conductor and educator, this elemental music is recorded in everyone, but only some choose to hear it as life throws discords and distractions.

Carl Orff expressed the concept of elemental music when he wrote that his method of teaching music involved building on the natural speech and body rhythms innate in everyone. He believed that elemental music could be created, learned, and understood and performed without extensive musical training. He wrote that elemental music “is never music alone but unifies with movement, dance, and speech. It is music that one makes oneself, in which one can take part not as a listener but as a participant. Elemental music is near the earth, natural and physical within the range of everyone to learn it and experience it and it is suitable for the child.”

Mike DeMarino embraced Orff’s musical philosophy and he experienced Orff’s elemental music by listening to his musical soul and earning a B.S. in Music Education at Edinboro University in Pennsylvania, focusing on the K12 certification. He expected to teach music in the public schools, but then he listened to Happy Hearts principal Jim Conroy advocate the possibilities of tapping into the music in the souls of special needs children. Jim Conroy convinced Mike DeMarino to teach music to the children at Happy Hearts.

In January 1974, Mike began his musical curriculum at Happy Hearts School, including all children and adults from pre-school through the Ash/Craft adult workshop. He conducted music classes two to three times per week and taught the children singing, moving, and playing Orff instruments. They could practice their music and hone their talents by participating in choir and band.

The music curriculum also featured planned musical shows. Mike and his colleagues and students presented the music shows which were open to the public, three times a year- at Halloween, Christmas, and to celebrate spring. The musical shows included all classes and adults until the adults moved to a new independent work shop, when the focus shifted to preschool and school age children.



*The choir performs “America” at a Happy Hearts School program.*



*The players pose with their new shirts from Sonor Percussion in the music room.*

## Happy Halloween...



## Merry Christmas...



*Melvin Mann, a soft-spoken student, shines as the Happy Hearts Christmas tree during a Happy Hearts Christmas program.*



*The choir sings "White Christmas."*

Besides putting his Orff musical principles into practice and helping his students find and release their singing voices, Mike's music classes and musicals gave parents the joy that many on the other side of the "special needs" label take for granted. Happy Hearts parents, grandparents, other relatives, and friends could attend concerts and search for that one special smile above the choir robe or the special set of dimpled knees under the custom-made costume and like any other proud parent, smile, and wave when they found them.

"He gave our family the gift of concerts and excited kids participating in them while equally excited families watched," one parent said.

"He coaxed music from our child that we never knew existed," another commented.

## Saluting Spring!



*Andy Fields performs "The Rainbow Connection", one of his favorite songs, during a spring concert.*

Through the years Mike completed additional course work to earn a MSPR certificate from the state of Ohio. From 1974 until the 1990s, his activities in the Ohio Music Educators Association and the Orff Schulwerk Association enabled him to complete special training and consultation in music education through seminars and conferences. He and his students were invited to perform in Cleveland where he met some of the composers and teachers of the music he used in the classroom.

Let the world, Sing Along....

*Sing, sing a song,*

*Let the world, sing along,*

*Sing of love that could be, sing for you and for me,*

*Sing, sing a song,*

*Make it simple, to last your whole life long, Do not worry that it is not good enough.*

*For anyone else to hear, Just sing, sing a song.*

The entire world did not sing along with the Happy Hearts choirs and the Orff Band players, but their voices and band penetrated far beyond the boundaries of Ashtabula County, with more and more people enjoying their music.

By 1975, Mike had decided to start a band for his students, but discovered that donated instruments, mostly brass and woodwinds were not suitable for them to play. Through funding, donations, and instrument trades, Mike and his supporters acquired more suitable Orff instruments like xylophones, marimbas, glockenspiels, metallophones, designed to resonate and produce a sound when players hit them with mallets. Drums and recorders are also used in the Orff method of making music.

Mike candidly admits that it took some attitude adjustment on his part to become accustomed to the atonal concept of Orff music when his background and training had focused on the tonal. Most music that is written in the western classical tradition is organized around a tonal center which means that it has a set harmonic and ordered patterns. A generic definition of atonal music is music that appears to lack a clearly defined tonal center. Sometimes Orff music features threads of theme and clusters of sound but it does not have a clearly defined traditional format like tonal music. “Once I adjusted my attitude, I discovered that the Orff method gave me freedom of interpretation and the freedom to create music outside of the traditional box,” he said

Using his creative freedom, Mike composed music, including the Happy Hearts Alma Mater which is sung at every graduation, and he founded the Orff Band. Working through the inevitable sour notes and crashing chords, Mike and his pupils created their distinctive musical signature. Soon the Happy Hearts Orff Band was performing for local, state, and eventually national audiences. The Orff Band was featured in a national magazine, *The Sample Case*, highlighting the latest advances in performance techniques for mentally retarded players.

From its Happy Hearts home base, the Orff Band performed at school music programs, local schools and at the YMCA for community service groups. It played at the County Home, the Ashtabula Towers for senior citizens, and at the local mall. Eventually, the choir was taken away from the program, but the band was allowed to continue. The Orff Band concerts grew in popularity and the band performed in the community as well as the school.

In 1980, the band was invited to play at the “Cherry Blossom Festival” in Washington D.C., but it could not accept because of the expense involved. It was

also invited to perform at the Mentor Pavilion and Recreation Center and did present its Orff demonstration and show there.

Under Mike's guidance the music program at Happy Hearts received critical acclaim and in 1984, Ohio States Art Consultant Doris Pfleufer evaluated the program as being a model program in Ohio.

In 1985, the Ohio Music Educators Association nominated the Orff Band to perform at the national "Very Special Arts Festival" which was held in Washington D.C. The band flew to Washington D.C. and stayed at the Gallaudet University for the deaf. The band then played a concert on National Public Radio at the Kennedy Center.

In 1986, the band opened the Professional Association for Retardation convention at the Ohio center in Columbus, playing and conducting a participation demonstration.

*A circle dance with audience participation at the PAR Conference at Ohio Center in Columbus, Ohio.*



*Tammy Shaw relaxes in between shows at the PAR Conference in Ohio Center.*



In 1986, the Orff Band traveled on a one-week tour, “The Liberty Eastern Seaboard Performance Tour.” They toured and performed in Boston, New York City, Philadelphia and at the Lincoln Memorial and on the steps of the Capitol building in Washington D.C.



*Visiting the Statue of Liberty in New York City.*



*The Orff Players play at Faneuil Hall in Boston with their tour bus in the background.*

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Jerry Kangas stands in front of Abe Lincoln at the Lincoln Memorial.



*The Orff Players perform on the steps of the United States Capitol Building in Washington, D.C.*

## Grace Notes





*Mike DeMarino leads a group of Lincoln students singing "Jingle Bells and other music numbers presented during the students' "Christmas Gift" program. Students from all classes performed numbers for the audience of family and friends. July 18, 1974.*



*Washington Bound. These members of the Happy Hearts School Orff Players will be representing the State of Ohio at the National Very Special Arts Festival in Washington D.C., May 23 to 26. They are (seated left to right) Jennifer McMahan, Tammy Shaw, Gabrielle Sumner. (Standing left to right) Mike DeMarino music teacher, Hannu Roivas, Audrey Thomas, Jerry Kangas, Lee Shultz, and Ray Richmond. April 9, 1984.*

*Ready to Perform. The Orff Players of Happy Hearts School will perform at the religious service Friday at Ashtabula Kent State University, kicking off next weekend's Blessing of the Fleet at Ashtabula Harbor. Shown are from left, Tamara Shaw, and Andy Fields. Standing from left are Jeff Schultz, Dick West, Carl Arnold, Jerry Kangas, Director Mike DeMarino, Judy Kohowski, Ray Richmond, John Hurley, and Audrey Thomas. May 28, 1986,*



*Merry Music Makers.*

*Students at Happy Hearts School in Mike De Marino's music class will present a program entitled "Of Christmas Past," 9:30 a.m. Wednesday at school. The show will feature material from previous shows and is open to the public. All classes are participating and the school band also will perform. Pictured during a rehearsal are Benjamin Sullivan, Mary Almasy, Bruce Carpenter, Mike Emory, Jane Thomas, Carrie Stowe and in front to play Santa Claus is Ricarda Reynolds. December*



*12, 1988. Photo by Jim Matthews of the Ashtabula Star Beacon.*

The Salute of Liberty and eastern travels ended, but student enthusiasm and participation and a dedicated music teacher kept the music going round and round in programs and the Orff Band for

the first half of the 1990s. In March 1992, the Ashtabula Star Beacon reported that the Orff Players from Happy Hearts School entertained residents of Con-Lea Nursing Home in Geneva on March 2. The Band has performed at the White House, for the Governor of Ohio, and in Boston, New York, and Philadelphia.

Michael DeMarino, Happy Hearts music teacher, directed the band. Band members included Rob DeCaro, Matt Mucci, Mary Almasy, Carrie Stowe, Ken Farley, Willie Dudas, Tony Butler, Jeff Schultz, Benjamin Sullivan, Andy Fields, Keith Henton, and Amy Kuligowski. The story pointed out that the Orff Band performed for area organizations and stated that Mike DeMarino could be contacted at Happy Hearts School for information about scheduling performances.

For some musicians performing is an unenjoyable, but necessary evil accompanied by stage fright at worst and endured at best, while others crescendo in the limelight. Mike understood the necessity of public performance, public relations, and placing his band in the public eye. "It is sort of a public final exam where the students demonstrate how much they have learned. And they have fun while they're doing it. For me, it is a way of giving back to the community," he said.

The Association for Retarded Citizens for Ashtabula County also understood the benefits of exposing people to its mission while enjoying music and the Council

emotionally and financially supported the Orff Band, providing funds for transportation to events and performances.

Despite the happy student performers and positive local, state, and national acclaim, the Happy Heart's Music program closed in 1996. As Mike described it, "The program came to a close when the school changed to regular classes."

The closing of his program did not end Mike's Association with Happy Hearts School. The Association for Retarded Citizens for Ashtabula County had named him Teacher of the Year in 1987. Joan Thompson, 1987 President of the Association for Retarded Citizens of Ohio summed up his impact on his students and community when she said, "Mike is a dedicated person not only in teaching music, but as friends of his students. We feel for all his accomplishments with our special children we want to honor him with this award and thank him for his dedication and love for the children."

Mike continued his career at Happy Hearts as a classroom teacher, and then as principal. Mike was the music teacher at Happy Hearts for 22 years, a classroom teacher for six and one-half years, and the principal for eight years. He retired in 2012, after 36 ½ years of service at Happy Hearts. Like Glenn Holland in the 1995 movie, "Mr. Holland's Opus," Mike DeMarino retired with a symphony of students literally and figuratively applying the music he taught them in their daily lives.

Mike DeMarino taught his students that they, too, could heard music in their hearts and souls. He helped them listen to their own music, and he enabled them to "sing a song" and let the world sing along.

La, la, la, la, la, La la, la, la, la La la la la la la la.

Sing a song!





Holiday Music. Mike DeMarino, music teacher at Happy Hearts and students are practicing hard for their Christmas program on Wednesday, December 14 at 9:30 a.m. Students from left to right are Carrie Stowe; Elias Vazquez; Rebecca Fortier; Benjamin Sullivan; and Mary Almasy.

### **Happy Hearts Sings Merry Christmas**

December 3, 1988

The Happy Hearts School will present a holiday music program on Wednesday, December 14 in the school gym at 9:30 a.m. The students under the director of music teacher Mike DeMarino, will present a variety of songs from ten previous Christmas programs.

The program is titled "Of Christmas Past," and is free of charge and open to the public.

Beginning the program is the school band, the Orff Players, who will present, "Deck the Halls," "Chatter with the Angels," and "Hear that Train."

The preschool will follow with their renditions of "Christmas Time Is Here," and "Up on the House Top. "The Transitional Class will present "Must Be Santa," and "The Christmas Whale. "The primary grades will vocalize three selections, "Rudolph," "We Wish You a Merry Christmas," and "My Little Red Wagon."

The Advanced Students will present "Christmas Boxes," "Frosty the Snowman,"



and “Holly Jolly Christmas.”

Rounding off the program will be The Work Study Group who will sing “It’s Christmas Pretty Baby,” “Pablo the Reindeer,” “Jingle Bells,” and “White Christmas.”

### Special Stories- Making Music in Heaven

Alison Anne Cowan graduated from Happy Hearts School and worked at Ash/Craft Industries until she retired in 1998. She participated in the musical, Rock Nativity, for several years and knew all of the words and music to the shows that her father and brother participated in as well. She died on February 5, 2005.

Sheila Ann Salvato graduated from Happy Hearts School in May 1990 and worked at Ash/Craft Industries for a time. A gifted musician, she played with her mother and aunt for six years and later with the Magic Buttons from Cleveland for nine years. While playing the Magic Buttons Sheila made three recordings and traveled to the Caribbean two times. She was a Bronze Life Time Member of the Cleveland Polka Hall of Fame. She died September 8, 2012.



Fairport Polkateers were among those honored at a recent awards dinner held at the St. Clair Slovenian Home in Cleveland. Pictured (front from left) are Fran Sajn of

Concord; Pauline Meaney and Sheila Salvato of Ashtabula; Ann Barbish of Euclid; Jim Savasiano of Mentor. (Back row) Pat Salvato of Ashtabula; Warren Fabian of Willoughby Hills; Ron Loncar and Mary Shume of Euclid. They received a plaque, proclamations from Governor George Voinovich and others.

Christina Anne Pearson graduated from Happy Hearts in 1993 and worked briefly at Ash/Craft Industries. Her love of country music motivated her to travel to Nashville as well as meet John Schneider of the Dukes of Hazzard several times. She died on September 28, 2008.

### Blue Note

*December 24, 1971. Excited children from Happy Hearts School, 146 in number, greet Santa Claus as he strolled among the luncheon tables at Ole Kings Tavern Monday. Owner Dan Rossi donated the lunch and employees gave their services for the party. North Kingsville Police Chief Nick Walker arranged the affair and took individual pictures of each child with Santa as he presented a gift to each. Harold Bowdler donated fruit baskets to the children. Each child will be presented a print of himself with Santa, courtesy of the North Kingsville Police Department.*



## Chapter Fourteen: Happy Hearts Sports and Special Olympics

### *Happy Hearts and the Special Olympics*

*The special Olympics motto: "Let me win, but if I cannot win, let me be brave in the attempt."*



*1968. Boys of Happy Hearts School display their new uniforms given to them by Reliance Electric Company. Representing Reliance are (far right) Mrs. Sally Davis, publicity chairman; chairman Francis Howe and Mrs. Charlotte Barchanowicz. Athletic director Mrs. Jacolyn Louys and John Buchtinec, assistant coach (far left) prepare to meet the invading West Junior High Reserves.*

The Fair Share Committee of Reliance Electric Co. has donated new uniforms to the boys of Happy Hearts School basketball team. The boys appropriately played their first game of the season in their new gym.

Chairman of the committee was Francis Howe. He was aided by Mrs. Sally Davis, publicity chairman and Mrs. Charlotte Barchanowicz.

Athletic Director Mrs. Jacolyn Louys said the team will play three or four games before entering a state tournament in Springfield March 1.

John Buchtinec, Assistant Coach, aids in teaching the boys, ranging from 16 to 21, the fundamentals of basketball.

The uniforms are blue with gold trim and are accompanied by matching practice

jerseys.

## **Happy Hearts Organizes Cage Team November 26, 1968**



These Happy Hearts School basketball players were awarded a trophy for participating in the Central Ohio Retarded Persons Basketball League. They are (front) Ronald Whelchel; Wendell Henricks; Mike Sabados; Richard Bowers; and Danny Brunell. (Back row) Tommy Utter; Paul Connors; Orville Pickett; Larry Phelps; and Coach Mrs. Jacolyn Louys, holding the trophy.

Happy Hearts School formed a basketball team and by invitation played at the Central Ohio Retarded Persons basketball tournament at Springfield on two February weekends. The boys had only four weeks to prepare for the meet under the supervision of Mrs. Jacolyn Louys, who acted as their coach. Mrs. Louys is an

instructor at the school.

According to Wayne Reese school director, this was a new experience for the boys and the school itself for taking part in this type of program. Since the trips to Springfield were so successful, efforts will now be made by Mr. Reese and the school to localize a program in the Northeastern Ohio area. The boys practiced at Edgewood Junior High School.

Most valuable player of the March 8th Third Annual State Invitational Basketball Tournament was Kenneth Tryon from Happy Hearts School in Ashtabula. Kenneth netted forty points for his team.



### **Happy Hearts Nets Awards March 19, 1969**

The basketball team of the Happy Hearts School captured two trophies in the Third Annual State Invitational Basketball Tournament at Springfield, Ohio. The event was held March 8. It is sponsored by the Central Ohio Retarded Children's Athletic Association.

The county team received a trophy as runner up and one for the best performance by an individual player.

Kenneth Tyron was acknowledged as the most valuable player of the tournament at which he was high point man. Kenneth tallied forty points for his team.

The trip for the team was financed by the Jaycees.

In addition to their coach, Mrs. Jacolyn Louys, and escorts, the school had six cheerleaders at the tournament to cheer the team on. The cheerleader's way was arranged by the Ashtabula Council for Retarded Children.

Happy Hearts teams have played in the tournament all of the three years the tournament has been held.

### **Sports Activities, 1986 New Directions, June 1986**

Anne Zeitler, Physical Development Instructor, reported on some of the sports and development activities at Happy Hearts School and Ash/Craft Industries in the June 1986 issue of New Directions, the community newsletter of the Ashtabula County Board of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities. She reported that athletes from across Ohio would be converging on Columbus for the State Special Olympic Games from June 27-29th, including thirty-four athletes from

Ashtabula County.

Over one hundred local Special Olympians participated in local events. After competing in the winter cross country ski competition in Perry, the local competitors fielded a team of six skiers for the Winter State Meet at Boston Hills Ski Resort, bringing home five medals and a sixth-place ribbon. Jerry Kangas won the gold at the winter event, and Marcos Rios, Vicki Hippely, and John Hurley won silver medals. Benji Sullivan captured a bronze in the meet and Missy Feke finished in sixth place.

Bowling took over the spotlight in the spring and thirteen local keglers gained berths on the state team by virtue of their local first place finishes. The local tournament took place at Kings Lanes in North Kingsville.

Following the local tourney, the Ashtabula Special Olympics program hosted the Area Bowling Meet for the first time ever. It was held at St. Angelo's Lanes in Ashtabula and hosted over 120 bowlers from four counties.

The track meet on April 26th at Edgewood High School field topped the year's activities with an all-day event with over seventy athletes competing. As in the past, support for the Special Olympic program continues to grow. This year 33 Happy Hearts School and Ash/Craft Industries staff members volunteered, along with thirty-nine volunteers from the community.

## Happy Hearts Cheerleaders Smile and Cheer





*Happy Hearts cheerleaders (from left) Mary Almasy, Ricarda Reynolds, and Victoria Hippely are part of a 12-member squad which has helped boost team and audience enthusiasm this season. March 24, 1991. Ashtabula Star Beacon photo by Carl E. Feather.*

Pam Keep, physical education teacher at Happy Hearts School discovered that the mischievous smile of student Ricarda “Nicie” Reynolds had some meaning behind it. Nicie, confined to a wheel chair because of cerebral palsy, had a secret agenda.

Earlier in the semester, Nicie asked Pam who is cheerleading advisor, if she could watch a cheer leading practice session. Her teacher agreed and within a few minutes Pam realized what Nicie had in mind all along. “She started vocalizing and doing all the cheers. She moved her chair in the same direction as the girls,” Pam said.

Boldly Nicie went one step further and asked if she could become a member of the squad. She left the gym as a Happy Hearts cheerleader. “Nicie did this for herself.

It was her own self-confidence, her determination to stand up for herself, that got her on this squad,” Pam said.

Pam said the squad was formed last year to motivate the crowd and boost the morale of the Roadrunners, the boys’ basketball team. The cheerleaders do two floor cheers and about ten sideline chants. They wear blue and white outfits which are a combination of purchased sweaters and socks with skirts made by teacher assistants Barb Scott and Marian Flickinger.

The students on the squad range in age from 14 to 20. According to Pam, the handicaps of the squad members vary, ranging from slight mental disability to Down’s Syndrome and cerebral palsy. She said none of the twelve girls are alike. She said that cheerleading provides many therapeutic benefits, including learning to articulate, and practicing voice control through the cheers. Nicie’s speech therapist is provided with a copy of the cheers to use with her during therapy

sessions.

Nicie's mother Sandra says there have been psychological benefits as well. "I really feel that it has helped her overall on her self-esteem. It is helped her confidence," she said. She said that her daughter is very independent. "In spite of her birth defect she has always been involved, and I've tried to keep her involved in extracurricular activities."

Pam Keep said that the members of this year's squad had to go through a mock tryout, but everyone ended up being on the team. She said the squad has become very popular and she expects a flood of applicants next year. "I have already told the girls there will be official tryouts next year," she said.

### **1992 Sports Awards**

Principal Mary Ellen Higley along with Pam Keep, Barb Scott and Lisa Nurkka presented Sports Achievement Awards at a 1992 Awards Assembly.

Bowling Award winners in the Intermediate Department were Trevor Lundgren earning the highest individual ramp game and highest average score ramp bowler, Ken Farley for the highest individual game and highest average score, and Mike Taylor for the most improved intermediate bowler.

In the Advanced Department Joel Eaton won an awarded for the highest individual ramp game; Randy Fails won highest average score ramp bowler; Bob Stewart and Jeff Schultz achieved the highest average scores and Jeff Schultz scored the highest individual game. Keith Henton was the most improved advanced bowler.

Swimming Recognition Award winners were:

Dylan Wludyga; Christina Mongell; Kenny Miller; Kevin Ecklund; Jeremy Weber; Charlie Smith; Andy Fields; Casey Vaughan.

Junior Varsity Basketball Award winners: Michael Barricklow; William Griswold; Ron Turner; Vicky Hippely; Rob DeCaro; Will Dudas; Kathy Fisher; Robert Shinaberry; Nick Marsh.

Individual Jr. Varsity Awards: Michael Barricklow; William Griswold; Ron Turner; Vicky Hippely; Rob DeCaro; Will Dudas; Kathy Fisher; Robert Shinaberry; Nick Marsh; Rik Kansanen.

Most Improved J.V. Player – Ron Turner



Most Total Points Scored by a J.V. Player – Michael Barricklow\Most Valuable J.V. Player – Michael Barricklow

Varsity Basketball Awards Benjamin Sullivan  
Bob Stewart (Senior) Mike Emory  
Luis Perez Keith Henton Ken Farley

Individual Varsity Basketball Awards  
Most improved Varsity Player – Frank Johnson  
Most Total Points Scored by a Varsity Player – Luis Perez  
Most Valuable Varsity Player – Ken Farley

1992-1993 Athlete of the Year Award- Robert Stewart

Special thanks to Brent Woerner whose professional contributions to the swimming program greatly enhanced the student's skill levels.

Special thanks to all staff. Your personal contributions and professional attitude towards our student athletes is what made this school year a great success.

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Cheerleading Awards

Christina Pearson (Senior) Mindy Martinez (Senior) Angela Milbrandt (Senior)  
Jennifer Richardson (Senior)

Rosemarie Perry; Becky Fortier; Jennifer Aldrich; Beth Harley; Kathy Fisher; Amy Maddox; Jane Good; Mary Almasy; Robin Rich; Nicie Reynolds; Jane Thomas; Carrie Stowe, Captain's Award.

## **Robert Stewart Answers “Present” for 18 Years Straight May 27, 1993**

Robert “Bob” Stewart, a 1993 graduate of Happy Hearts School, earned an unbroken attendance record by not missing a day of school in 18 years. Mae Stewart, his mother says that when school was cancelled because of snow Bob would wait outside for the bus anyway.

Bob loved sports and had ribbons to prove it. He won sixty plus awards in the Special Olympics. He started in Special Olympics in 1983, as a member of the local ski team. Since then, he added lifting, basketball, track and field, bowling, and softball, to his repertoire. Bob was on Ohio’s Special Olympics team which traveled to the International games in St. Paul, Minnesota, in 1991, and on the ski team for the National Games in 1992 at Steamboat, Colorado.

Although he weighs only 128 ½ pounds, he can lift 255 and bench press 140. His bowling scores are equally impressive. He has bowled 205 and 202 games.

## **Find a Skate and Roll It Round, Round, Round August 26, 1995**

Jeff Schultz likes “Round and Round” by Perry Como because the song describes wheels. He admires wheels because he is a skater and a good one. Accepting a personal invitation, he will travel to Brookpark Skateland Sunday to participate in a Level 2 free-style skating exhibition. His program will be a patriotic number to “The Battle Hymn of the Republic.”

The only special Olympics artistic skater in Ohio, Jeff, has been skating for six years. His grandmother, Lila Abel, remembered how Jeff got started roller skating. She said that back in 1987, he went roller skating on a field trip. At first, he crawled around the walls, but quickly grew to love it. He has autistic tendencies and is kind of introverted, but he really likes having four wheels on each foot, she said.

In 1991, Jeff competed in the World Games in Minneapolis as an artistic skater, winning a gold medal in figures and a silver in free style. “You go by lottery,” Lila explained. “You could get upset about the fact Jeff isn’t going this year, but this is a fair way of doing it.”

In his six years of skating, Jeff has won many honors, gold medals and trophies.

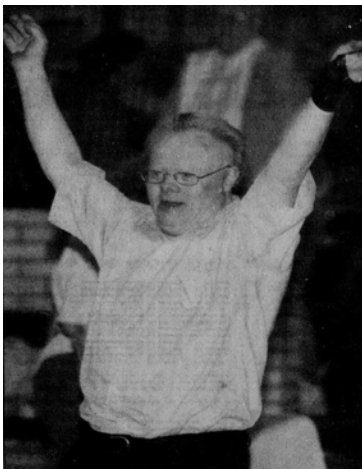
He has progressed through the regular levels of skating in dance, free style and figures and is now at level 2 and 3 of all events. That class is for all skaters, not just Special Olympians. He calls his roller skates “heavy metal” because they weigh so much.

Jeff and his grandparents must travel to Boardman three times a week to receive lessons from his coach, Jack Muransky at Skate Connection in that city, but Jeff and the Abels do not mind. John Abel, his grandfather, a former teacher and coach at Harbor and Lila, his grandmother worked as program director at the Y for 20 years are now retired.

A Special Olympian since he was eleven, Jeff began cross country skiing. He has won gold medals each year in the State Winter Games in the 500-meter and one-kilometer events. In addition, Jeff bowls in the handicap league, averaging over 140. He also participates in track, competing in the 100-and 200-meter dashes events in which he won two gold medals in regional meets in East Liverpool and Austintown.

Having graduated from Happy Hearts School last spring, Jeff is now seeking a job. When he applied for work at the soon to be opened Walmart store, he was pleased to discover that he will not start until November if he gets the job. This way, he will still be able to pitch for the Special Olympics softball team, which will compete in the state softball tournament in Troy in September.

A confirmed Browns and Indians fan, Jeff says “I like both of them. Cleveland all the way.” Informed that both were playing Friday and he might have to decide which to watch, he said, “I’ll hook up two television sets, one with the Browns on and one with the Indians on.”



April 28, 2000. Mike Spore of Geneva rejoices Sunday after making a good shot during a day of bowling for Ash/Craft employees at St. Angelo’s Lanes in Saybrook Township.

#### Blue Notes



## Happy Hearts Bowling

*Robert Hunter, a handicapped student at the Happy Hearts School shows what he's learned in bowling class in the past year just before the start of the Kingsville Area Lions Club Bowling Tournament. The bowling class, sponsored by the Lion's Club and Kings Lanes, has given instructions to 50 Happy Hearts students. Robert Hunter rolled a strike.*



*Doing well. March 28, 1988. There were plenty of competitors at the local Special Olympics Bowling Competition at Kings Lanes in North Kingsville. Amy Maddox, with a little help from local Special Olympics coordinator Dick Flower, rolls her bowling ball down the lane trying to get a strike. Amy is a student at Thomas Jefferson Elementary and the daughter of Cindy and John Maddox of Ashtabula. Ashtabula Star Beacon photo by Jim Matthews.*

*Nancy Banner, a physical development instructor at Happy Hearts School and special Olympics coordinator gives Matt Theiss some instruction during a Kings' Lanes bowling session. Photo by Chuck Reinhart.*





*April 24, 1988. Students from Happy Hearts School enjoyed a day of bowling on April 10 at Lake Shore Lanes. The annual bowling party is sponsored by the North End Club. While they bowled, the group was also treated to pizza, donated by Pizza Villa.*

### **Happy Hearts Bowlers Learn Many Skills Besides Bowling**



Watching team member Teri Church take her turn to bowl are members of her team. They belong to Happy Hearts Bowling team in Conneaut. Three mothers, two of which bowl with the youngsters, are sponsors for the team. A banquet is held and trophies are awarded each year after tournaments.

When local students from Happy Hearts School gather every Saturday at Conneaut Recreation Center Bowling Lanes, they learn more than just how to bowl. They share friendships, team support, learn more skills and improve coordination, experience winning and losing, confidence and joy for fellow bowlers, competition, and a desire to strive for improvement.

Mrs. Duane Dickson started the team in the summer of 1974 to give the children an extracurricular activity. At first students from Ashtabula area and Conneaut bowled on the Ame team at the REC, but now Ashtabula area students have their own team at a nearby bowling alley.

The Conneaut team has eight members, male and female, and three parent

chaperones, two of which bowl on the team. They include Mrs. Dickson, Mrs. John Kehoe, and Mrs. Dottie Baumgardner.

The team membership is open to all students of all ages attending Happy Hearts School. They bowl three games each Saturday beginning at 12:20 p.m. and then compete in tournaments each January. They also hope to have spring tournaments. The season ends with a banquet where trophies are awarded. This year a banquet is being planned with the Ashtabula team.

### **Ash/Craft Clients Enjoy a Bowling Outing**

High fives and leaps of joy ran rampant Sunday afternoon as developmentally disabled athletes enjoyed a day of bowling at St. Angelo Lanes.

“They look so forward to this,” said Ken Robbins, who runs a company that provides services for Ash/Craft Industries clients who live independently. “As soon as spring hits, they start asking when the event will be held.”

“This is a yearly thing,” said Bruce Campbell, president of the North End Club that has sponsored the bowling event for 20 years. “Eighty-seven disabled athletics bowled two games and received trophies and meals,” he said.

Bowling styles were varied, from a two-hand drop shot to a more traditional approach, but the pure joy of bowling was evident on the participant’s faces. Bowling ramps were available for wheelchair-bound competitors. Bruce Campbell said one participant kicked the ball off the ramp and bowled a 158, insisting on not having anyone help him.

Bruce Campbell said the North End Club, a private social club, has been supporting local charities since 1934. “We take everything we make and give it back to the community,” he said.

He went on to say that the Young Men’s Social Club; The East End Club; Pizza Villa; Nicky’s Place; Topps; and several other businesses helped make the event a success. He said that St. Angelo’s Lanes also provided access to the bowling alley at a reduced cost.

### **Kings Lane Proprietor Dorothy May Dies**

Dorothy C. May, 77, bowling best Friend of Happy Hearts School, Ash/Craft, and

community bowlers died on February 28, 2003.

The principal owner and operator of Kings Lanes in North Kingsville, she chose bowling as her favorite sport and practiced it to perfection. She set many records in Ashtabula County, including sixteen time all events champion, nine-time singles champion, and five-time doubles champion for the Women's Bowling Association Tournament. She has been enshrined in the National Bowling Hall of Fame in St. Louis, Missouri.

### **Karl Pearson's Bowling Beat**

Karl Pearson summarized the bowling scene of May 10, 2006, and Happy Hearts and Ash/Craft bowlers were in the center of the action.

Busy Happy Hearts and Ash/Craft Bowlers Bowling with Deputies Tournament at Kings Lanes  
May 10, 2006

Bowling with Happy Hearts and Ash/Craft people at Kings Lanes in North Kingsville has become an important rite of spring for deputies from the Ashtabula County Fraternal Order of Police No. 106. Each year in late April or early May the deputies and the Happy Hearts and Ash/Craft bowlers participate in their Bowling with Deputies Tournament.

Besides providing their bowling facilities, Kings Lanes proprietor Bill and Donna Scoville supply lunch and drinks for the bowlers. Giant Eagle also donated cakes for the tournament.

High score bowlers received first, second, and third place trophies, but none of the bowlers left the lanes empty handed. They all received an Olympic-style medal from Rob Rich, proprietor of Play All Awards and Engraving of Ashtabula.

Carol Tryon, first place and first tie winner, bowled the high single game with a 175 and she also bowled a 156 game. Her 486 series score proved to be the highest of the tournament.

Bobby Stewart, another first-time winner, finished second in the final standings and tied for the second-highest game turned in with a 158. Third-place finisher Jim Flower, a frequent participant in the tournament, also tied for the second-highest game with Bobby Stewart and William Griswold.

Other bowlers receiving special awards included Linda Bennett, Claude Gaumer, Beth Harley, Tammy Hayes, Steve Hinkle, Danny Mast, Chris McGuire, Larry Moroski, Jerry Russell, Jeff Schultz, Tammy Shaw, and Mike Spore.

The event is funded in part by the sale of 50-50 raffle tickets during the lodge's annual Golden Oldies Show. Many off-duty deputies come to the tournament dressed in their uniforms and also bowl along with the Happy Hearts and Ash/Craft participants.

"Kings Lanes has agreed to once again hold next year's tournament in their facility," FOP Lodge president Brian Hubbard said. "We're thankful to Donna and Bill for their cooperation in the past. We are looking forward to being there again."

"We are also thankful to Rob Rich for his assistance with the medals and trophies," FOP lodge secretary-treasurer Julie Petro said. "We're also thankful to Giant Eagle, especially the bakery staff there. Finally, we want to thank all the citizens who purchased 50-50 raffle tickets.

"The bowling tournament this year was a great success. We are looking forward to returning to Kings Lanes and making it even bigger and better than it has been before."

### **Annual Kings Lanes Handicap Tournament**

Another event that has become a tradition at Kings Lanes is the annual Kingsville Area Handicap Tournament. Started by late Kings Lanes proprietor Dotty May, thousands of bowlers from northeastern Ohio and northwestern Pennsylvania have participated in the tournament during its 35-year run.

There is still time to get involved in this year's tournament. Competition continues through June

Events are held for five-person teams, doubles, and singles handicap. The tournament is based on 80 percent handicap. A \$1,000 prize is offered to any member of a winning team based on two hundred teams entering, while the runner-up team or individual earns \$500. Entry fee is \$26 per person per event. All entrants must be United States Bowling Congress sanctioned bowlers.

Those bowlers wishing consideration for the all-events title are charged an additional \$4 fee and their standing is based on their scratch score. Entry forms are



available at all area bowling centers. Entry fees should be made out to Kings Lanes and mailed to P.O. Box 247, North Kingsville 44068. Entries can also be made by calling Kings Lanes at 224-2148.

Summer action Even though virtually every bowling center scales back considerably during the summer, at least three area houses are hosting at least one league.

A Friday night mixed league for the summer will be held at Lake Shore Lanes. League winners will receive new bowling balls. A banquet will be held at the end of the season.

Sonny Lanes will be holding a summer league on Wednesday nights from June 7-Aug. 9. A fun night will also be held Aug. 16. A Summer Sizzler League for senior bowlers is being organized at St. Angelo's Lanes. Bowling will take place each Tuesday at 10:30 a.m.

### **Two from Happy Hearts and Ash/Craft Workshop Compete in Chicago**

A Happy Hearts School student Julie Morse, 15, and Richard Miller, 22, of the Ash/Craft Workshop, are participating in the Special International Olympics in Chicago today and Saturday. Almost 4,000 people, including the athletes, coaches, and chaperones will attend the meet at Soldiers Field.

Julie will run in the 50-yard dash and is entered in the softball throw. Richard will compete in the 50-yard dash and the 300-yard run. Both were chosen after competing in the Ohio Special Olympics held in the Cleveland Stadium on June 19 and 20.

Julie is the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Ernest Morse, Rome, and Richard is the son of George Miller of Sheffield. They are accompanied by Robert McCartney, physical education teacher at the school and Mrs. Vincent (Dorothy) Bishop, supervisor.

The purpose of the Special Olympics is to provide athletic competition for the mentally retarded and to stimulate development of recreation programs for the retarded across the U.S. and Canada. The Olympics are sponsored by the Joseph P. Kennedy Jr. Foundation.

Mrs. Bishop said the value of exercise and games for the retarded cannot be over emphasized.



### **Two from Happy Hearts and Ash/Craft Workshop Win in Chicago August 17, 1970**

Three fourth place ribbons were won in Chicago by two Ashtabula County competitors Friday and Saturday at the Special International Olympics. Julie Morse, 15, of Happy Hearts School won fourth-place ribbon in the 50-yard dash and Richard Miller, 22, of the Ash/Craft Workshop took fourth in the 50-yard dash and 300-yard run.

According to Mrs. Dorothy Bishop one of the two chaperones, there were over 2,500 competitors from all of the fifty states, Canada, and France.

There were many celebrities at the event, Mrs. Bishop said. Both county representatives shook hands with former astronaut John Glenn. Julie had her picture taken with Mrs. Eunice Shriver and Mr. Glenn, Mrs. Bishop said.

Robert McCartney, physical education instructor at Happy Hearts, said, "The treatment we receive was the best that could be offered. The Chicago Jaycees did a wonderful job of running the Olympics."

Julie is the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Ernest Morse, Rome Township. Richard is the son of George Miller of Sheffield. The two county representatives were chosen following competition in the Ohio Special Olympics held at Cleveland Stadium in June.

## **Bob Stewart, Jr. Wins 50-Meter Dash**



*May 13, 1985. Easy Winner. Bob Stewart, Jr., representing Happy Hearts School and Ash/Craft at the Special Olympics Saturday at Memorial Field in Geneva crosses the finish line first in the men's 50-meter dash. The Special Olympics, sponsored by the Geneva Jaycees, had 125 participants from four counties, including forty from Ashtabula County.*



## **1988 Special Olympics**

*Ash/Craft's double gold medal winners at the 1988 Special Olympics are (left to right) Jim Flower of Ashtabula; Dan LaManna of Geneva; Pat Nappi of Ashtabula; Mary Licate of Ashtabula; Jeff Spencer of Kingsville; Ralph Hammond of Conneaut; and Tony Turner of Geneva.*

*July 24, 1988. Photo and story by Scott Fagerstrom, contributing editor*

A group of 43 Ashtabula County contestants, including ten from Conneaut, turned in a special effort during the 18th Annual Ohio Special Olympics Summer Games in Columbus recently.

The Ash/Craft based Ashtabula County Special Olympics team collected sixty-five medals (31 Gold, 22 Silver and 12 Bronze) under the guidance of coach and chaperone Dave Lovejoy. Dave and about fifteen other chaperones shared the glory in what has become a yearly highlight for all those involved.

“That is the best we’ve done since 1982 when I got here,” Dave said. “And it’s one of the best ever.”

“We did just great. Over 75 percent (38) of our athletes won medals and I think

that would be great for anybody especially when you are competing with eighty-eight counties.”

There were about 3,200 athletes from around the state competing at the Ohio Stadium and St. John Arena on the campus of Ohio State University, and Dave Lovejoy said it is an experience the athletes will not soon forget and are already looking forward to going again next year.

Ash/Craft had seven athletes grab two gold medals in their respective competitive divisions.

Conneaut's Ralph Hammond, 17, won his division in both the 200-meter run and softball throw; Ashtabula's Jim Flower, 22, was victorious in the 50-meter dash and soft ball throw; Ashtabula's Pat Nappi, 31, captured the 100-meter dash and the softball throw; Geneva's Dan LaManna, 30, won the 50-meter dash and softball throw; Ashtabula's Mary Licate, 30, took top honors in the 50-meter dash and softball throw; Kingsville's Jeff Spencer, 26, won the 200-meter and 800-meter runs; and Geneva's Tony Turner, 31, won the 50-meter dash and the long jump.

There are five age groups each for men and women beginning with 8–11-year-olds; 12-15; 16- 21; 22-29; and 30 and over with athletes also grouped into performance divisions, Dave Lovejoy said.

Other Conneaut medal winners include: Terri Church, 26, first in softball throw, second in standing long jump; Ed Cook, 32, second in the 50-meter dash and the softball throw; Robbie DeCaro, 9, first in Frisbee throw and second in bowling; Diane Dickson, 39, second in the standing long jump and the softball throw; Tammy Hayes, 27, first in bowling and second in the Frisbee throw; Mary Kehoe, 37, second in the standing long jump and third in the softball throw; Walter Kightlinger, 18, first in Frisbee throw; Jeanne Litchfield, 50, second in the standing long jump; and Linda Strong, 48, first in Frisbee throw and second in bowling.

The Summer Games included nine sports, movies, recreational clinics, and the colorful Opening Ceremonies.

Ohio State football star and two-time Heisman Trophy winner Archie Griffin led the Ash/Craft Olympians into the stadium for the traditional lighting of the Olympic Flame.



Coach Lovejoy said coaching more than one hundred athletes competing for the opportunity to represent Ashtabula County in the games does not leave much time for specialties.

“There were some classes set up through the workshop for afterhours practices, but we just taught them the basics like when to run and how to jump out instead of up,” he said.

Pam Keep, who was unable to make the trip to Columbus, assisted Coach Lovejoy. In addition to the competition, Coach Lovejoy said, the Ash/Craft Olympians, who were sponsored by their booster club, enjoyed time spent at Tent City, a carnival type atmosphere set up for the entertainment of athletes in between competitions.

“Everyone really enjoyed it. It is a dynamite program and it’s the big blow off of the year for the athletes.”

He said the Ashtabula County team hopes to compete in more events, including a softball team, in future Olympics and is anxiously awaiting the cross-country skiing competition in the next Winter Games.

### **Ashtabula County 1991 Special Olympics Team Will Compete in Columbus**

June 26, 1991. Special Thanks. Members of the Ashtabula County Special Olympics team gathered to thank the community for its support of fund-raising efforts which will allow its forty-six members to travel to the state competition on Friday through Sunday in Columbus. Fund-raising events and contributions brought \$2,269 into the program.

Special Olympics. August 4, 1991. Ohio Special Olympics Roller-Skating Team



members posed with baseball great Harmon Killebrew during the 1991 International Special Olympics Games in Minneapolis. Harmon Killebrew (back row), a Minnesota Twins legend and a member of Baseball’s Hall of Fame.

## **Special Olympians Prepare for Winter Game Ski Races**

January 16, 1992, by Nancy Erikson

North Kingsville. The snowy weather that has been late in arriving in Ashtabula County came in time this week for the Ashtabula County Winter Special Olympics. Ski races were held Wednesday afternoon on the field between Ash/Craft and Happy Hearts School on Green Road. The twenty-one skiers from both Ash/Craft and Happy Hearts will compete Saturday at the Perry YMCA from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. Those who place at Saturday's meet will go on to compete at the state event at the end of the month at Cuyahoga Valley. Ski coach Molly McCarthy said the team has been practicing since Nov. 4 and when the snow was lacking, they would exercise in the gymnasium.

"We have a great time," McCarthy said. "They're very excited about going Saturday."

The team raced across the field against some of the staff at Happy Hearts and Ash/Craft with the encouragement of Special Olympics head coach Dave Lovejoy and assistant ski coach Jodie Fowler.

The first winter games in Ashtabula County were in 1988 and are played every year weather permitting. A summer Olympics is also being held. For this year's game, the El Kadir Grotto donated \$360 worth of gloves and mittens for the skiers and Sports n' Sports in Ashtabula took 35 percent off the price for the mittens and gloves.

After the races were completed Wednesday afternoon, skiers, coaches, and spectators were treated to hot chocolate while the winners received first, second, and third place ribbons.

The first-place winners of this year's games included: Vickey Hippely, Rob DeCaro, Jeff Shultz, Scott Mather, Nick Marsh, Tammy Shaw, Melissa Feke, and David Baker.

## **Ash/Craft and Happy Hearts School Special Olympics Ski Team Members Sliding to Steamboat Springs**

February 29, 1992- These Ashtabula County Special Olympics Ski Team members are among eight Ohio athletes who will travel to Steamboat Springs, Colorado for the National Nordic Skiing Championships for Special Olympics April 5-10. They are Lela Holcomb of Ash/Craft and Vicky Hippely of Happy

Hearts; Michael Emory and Bob Stewart of Happy Hearts School. Scott Mather is also going.

### **Special Olympics Ski Team Earns Medals**

April 11, 1992

Jefferson. The Special Olympic Nordic Ski team for the Ashtabula County Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities Board with Happy Hearts and Ash/Craft has earned various medals and awards from the national competition.

Ashtabula County Nordic Ski Coach Molly McCarthy said Team Ohio, which has five members out of eight from Ashtabula County, has accumulated seven gold, five silver, one bronze medals and one sixth place at the national competition in Steamboat Springs, Colorado.

### **Ashtabula County Special Olympics Coordinator Jill Jenner, Describes Special Olympics March 4, 1993**

Letter to Editor, Ashtabula Star Beacon,

On January 28-30, members of the Ashtabula County Special Olympics Ski Team traveled to Brandywine Ski Resort to compete in the Ohio State Special Olympics Winter Games.

On behalf of the athletes, coaches, parents, and fellow supporters of Ashtabula Special Olympics we would like to thank your newspaper for the excellent local coverage at the events.

For those unfamiliar with Special Olympics, ours is a year-round sports training and competition program for athletes with mental retardation. Our athletes train locally with volunteer coaches who prepare the athlete in his given sport for area competition. Area competition involves competing against other programs such as ours. Ashtabula County athletes compete against Mahoning, Columbiana, and Trumbull counties.

Those placing first, second or third at area competitions are entitled to compete at State Competitions in Columbus in June; or, as with skiing, the State Winter Games, usually held in Cuyahoga Valley, in January. Athletes from all over the state compete at Winter/Summer Games.

Ashtabula County has 214 athletes on its roster. These athletes compete in basketball, powerlifting, aquatics, cross country skiing, softball, roller skating, track and field and bowling. We hope to offer bocci, volleyball and cycling as coaches become available.

Because Ashtabula County Special Olympics is a non-profit organization, we must rely on the generosity of others in our fundraising efforts. Fundraising takes place all year long. These will be published in area papers so please look for them and their locations. Monies collected from fundraising are used to purchase equipment, transport, and house athletes, and pay entry fees at area and state competitions. If any entry fee is charged, Special Olympic rules dictate that an athlete may not be charged to compete in an event, so the fees must be paid by the club.

Fundraising also takes place at the state level throughout the year, throughout the state of Ohio, through magazine subscription sales, coupon redemption, and donations. This money is also important because it enables the State Special Olympics, which sponsors events for eighty-eight counties to run the whole Olympic program. We do not directly receive any money from this source to run our local program. Through the generosity of the Masonic Lodges, our athletes can attend the Summer Games at relatively no cost to our club.

Jill Jenner, Ashtabula County Special Olympics coordinator.

“We will continue to represent Ashtabula County in the proudest way we know how.”

### **Area Skaters Excel in Meet at Boardman April 22, 1993**

Four Ashtabula County Special Olympic roller skaters excelled in an invitational meet at Skate Connection in Boardman.

Randy Hershey finished first in the 300-meter race and third in the 100-meter race.

Rose Mauro finished first in a 100-meter race and placed second in a 300-meter race.

Amy Turner finished first in a 300-meter race and was third in a 1,000-meter race.

Mauro and Turner also teamed up for second place in the 200-meter relay in a time



of 56.4.

Jeff Schultz participated in a school figures exhibition and Figure 1B Serpentine Change 8. He also skated a solo dance to the “Progressive Tango” and a freestyle routine to “Beauty and the Beast.” He received a participation ribbon and a Special Olympics pin for his effort.

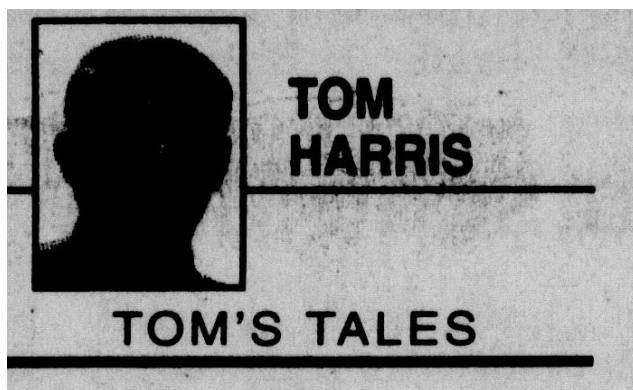
The Ashtabula County skaters are coached by Bill and Jill Jenner of Ashtabula and Jack Muransky of the Skate Connection staff.

### **Special Olympics, Fall 2000**

Jill Jenner, Local Special Olympics Coordinator, congratulated all the athletes competing in the 2000 Summer Games held at Ohio State University in Columbus in June 2000. Competitions were held in aquatics, track & field, bowling, and roller skating. Many gold, silver, and bronze medals were taken

The State Softball Tournament took place in Troy, Ohio, on September 8-10th. Ashtabula County Special Olympics placed third in the competition. Basketball try-outs began November 2nd, and cross-country ski practices are scheduled to begin November 28th.

### **Jeff Schultz Skis Off to Alaska, 2001**



February 2001  
Off to Alaska  
Special Olympics Athlete Ready for Ski Competition

by Tom Harris, Staff Writer, Ashtabula Star Beacon

Jeff Schultz's skis will carry him to Alaska this spring for the 2001 Special Olympics World Winter Games, where he will represent the United States in Nordic Skiing.

Schultz speaks slowly, clearly, and distinctly in a rich, baritone voice. "I'm thrilled," he said. "I am very thrilled. I am looking forward to meeting new people and making new acquaintances."

More than 2,750 athletes and coaches from over eighty countries will participate in the seventh World Winter Games, the largest international sporting event ever staged in Alaska, and the first large scale event to be held in the state in the new millennium. The competition will take place March 4-11 in major venues in Anchorage, Eagle River, and Girdwood. Schultz will compete in the 3-kilometer, 1-kilometer and 500-meter events and as a member of the 400-meter relay team. The 3K is a new event for Schultz, but his times in the 1K and 500 meters are the best in Ohio.

He is coached by his grandfather, John Abel, and Dick Flower. Schultz is also getting help from Brent Bunnell, an experienced Nordic skier, who will be skiing with Schultz once a week while the snow lasts.

"He does everything you ask him to do" Flower said. "He's very coachable, just as all our skiers are."

"I just do what the coaches tell me to do," Schultz said. "But work comes first." Schultz has worked at the Ashtabula Township Walmart since the store opened.

"Right now, I'm concentrating on improving my skills and coming in in first place," he said. "I need to remember to kick and glide, take diagonal strides and to ski with a lot of power. I am going to go for the gold, but I won't be a sore loser." In addition to the two one-hour ski practices Schultz has each week, he has a number of workout videos at home, including 8 Minute Abs, 8 Minute Buns and Torso Tuner.

"I've got to be in shape," he said. "I've got to be fit."

It will be Schultz's second trip to the World Games. In 1991, he and three other

Ashtabula County athletes competed in at the Summer Games in Minneapolis with Schultz bringing home a gold and silver medal in artistic roller skating. His poise and accomplishments belie the struggles the 27-year-old has faced. “He has lived with us since he was two,” said Schultz’s grandmother, Lila Abel.

“He was extremely hyperactive. He walked on the ceilings. He started in public schools, but they 86ed him in five minutes.”

Still, Schultz benefited from his time in the Buckeye system, learning to read and mastering the multiplication tables. Because of behavior problems, however, it was suggested Schultz go to Happy Hearts School.

“He did beautifully,” Abel said. “There was no peer pressure and no teacher pressure. He just flourished.”

After graduating from Happy Hearts, Schultz secured his position at Wal Mart through the Bureau of Vocational Rehabilitation.

“I return shopping carts from the parking lot,” he said. “Sometimes I have to dig them out of snow banks. That gives me a good workout. I also fill all the pop machines. I am sort of half stockman and half vendor.”

Besides working 25 hours a week at Wal-Mart and practicing twice a week with the ski team, Schultz bowls every Saturday and travels to Boardman every Sunday to hone his roller-skating skills under coach Jack Muransky.

The artistic skating is a special source of pride to his grandparents.

“The first time Jeff went to King’s Skating Arena, he couldn’t even stand up on the skates,” Lila Abel said. “But he just loved skating.”

For several years, Schultz was the only artistic skater in the Ohio Special Olympic Program. His success helped spur the growth of the sport and there are now fifteen skaters in the Ohio program.

And his interests are not limited to sports. Among other things, Schultz is very knowledgeable about astronomy. In fact, one recent “Who Wants to be a Millionaire” contestant might regret not having Schultz on his phone a friend list. “They wanted to know what Jupiter’s largest moon is,” Schultz said. “He decided to walk away. The answer is Ganymede. He would have guessed Europa.”

## **Polar Bear Plunges for Special Olympics**

Since 1996, human polar bears have been plunging into the frigid winter waters of Lake Erie to raise money for Special Olympics. A story in the Jefferson Gazette by Emily R. Eberlin, explored the February 26, 2003, Polar Bear Plunge.

More than three hundred plungers lined the shores of Lake Erie off of Ashtabula's Lake Shore Park Saturday afternoon. Now, it was not a large gathering of tall sticks with rubber suction cups attached, but a sight that was equally humorous perhaps.

Polar Bear Plunge participants wearing anything but ordinary attire, Penguins, hula dancers, bathing suits, pajamas, and American flag wearers along with police officers, students, and community members jumped into the frigid Lake Erie water around 3 p.m. for the Seventh Annual Ashtabula County Special Olympics fundraiser. The weather was miserable with its bitter temperatures, wind, and icy rain, but there was not a spot of gloom seen in the participant's attitudes.

"We are here for a good cause and it is always a great time no matter what," Ashtabula County Sheriff Deputy Jim Baehr said out of his penguin suit. "It is great to see how people dress for this thing."

"I would not miss this event," Dennis Mathieu, a Cuyahoga Falls police officer added while tying on the American flag bandana that matched his patriotic outfit. It is fun to give the event a little flare."

Those who came out to simply dabble their toes or dive head first into the water did so through a hole carved in the frozen lake by Kingsville's Styzej Brothers Construction Company.

It was not what they wore or even how far they came that mattered the most to Sharon Bradley, Polar Bear coordinator and dispatcher for the Ohio State Highway Patrol Ashtabula Post. It was the funds the event raised. Each participant was required to earn at least \$100 and Sharon reported the total profit to be around \$91,000.

Jefferson Area High School Students earned a good chunk of these proceeds. The thirty-six polar bear wannabes wearing special "Jefferson Plunger" T-shirts were able to bring \$4,550 to the event.

They even received a trophy for having the most school aged participants this year

to which they cheered, “We are Jefferson.”

Other schools having participants totaling thirty or less were Pymatuning Valley High School, Edgewood High School, and Lakeside High School. “We were able to raise the money through family, friends and community members sponsoring us,” Jefferson High School plunge leader and permanent substitute teacher, Courtney Obermyer said. “We believe in the cause.”

This is the third year Jefferson participated in the fundraiser and Courtney’s fifth year.

“The event means a great deal to me because I have a brother and future brother-in-law who participate in the Special Olympics, she said.

Sharon Bradley said the money helps send individuals with mental retardation to the Special Olympics in Columbus, a competition geared especially for them. She said more than 150 Ashtabula County residents are scheduled to participate in the games this year.

Since 1968, Special Olympics has provided sports training and competition opportunities for individuals with mental retardation. Special Olympics is a source of pride and inspiration for the participants and supporters of the Polar Bear Plunge. More than 1,000 athletes participate in Special Olympics Ohio. Year-round training and competition opportunities are provided in twenty-one different sports. Ashtabula County has 157 Special Olympics athletes registered.



### Waiting for Snow, Nagano

*Jim Flower has been selected to represent the United States in cross-country skiing at the World Special Olympics in Nagano, Japan, February 26 to March 5, 2005.*

*Ashtabula Star Beacon photo by Carl E. Feather.*

August 22, 2004, by Carl Feather

Jim Flower could use a few feet of snow and \$3,000. Jim, 38, has been chosen to go to Nagano, Japan, for the World Special Olympics in February 2005. As one of

a handful of Special Olympians from Ohio, Jim will compete in cross country skiing events, most likely the 500-meter and 1K event, say his parents, Richard, and Grace of Ashtabula Harbor.

Those are the events that helped get Jim into Team USA. Jim won a bronze in each event last winter at the state competition. The gold medalist was unable to travel to Japan because of family issues, and the silver medalist also had issues that eliminated him. The Flower family was on vacation in Hawaii when they received a phone call from Jill Jenner, Ashtabula County Special Olympics coordinator, informing them that Jim had been selected for Team USA.

“I was happy,” says Jim.

Marty Allen, program director for Special Olympics Ohio, estimates that there are more than three hundred Special Olympians in Ohio who train for and compete in winter games, but only five of them have been selected to be part of Team USA. Overall, 2,500 athletes from 40 to 50 nations will be in Nagano for the games February 26 to March 5, 2005.

“We’re really proud of him representing Ohio and the USA,” Allen says of Jim. “The delegation that’s going over there is representing the United States and we’re real proud to have Jim be a part of that.”

Jenner says Special Olympics Ohio will pick up about half of the cost to train and send Jim to Nagano. The balance, estimated at \$3,000, has to be raised in the community. Although the county has sent Special Olympians to World Games in the past, the amount raised was smaller because the venues were held in the United States, says Jenner. “This is double of what we normally have to raise,” Jenner says.

Richard Flower says several local events have been scheduled and more are in the works to raise the local match. A benefit dinner is planned at St. Peter’s Episcopal Church, the Flowers’ home congregation. A benefit breakfast is also in the planning stages.

Jenner says the Law Enforcement Torch Fund is pledging half of the proceeds from a golf outing at Hickory Grove on September 11 to go toward Jim’s trip. A reverse raffle the evening of October 16 at Jefferson Eagles will benefit him, as well.

A food vender raised money for Jim during last weekend’s Antiques Stroll in Ashtabula Harbor, and the “Weiner Wagon” charity project at Lowe’s raised

money for him as well.

Donations can be made directly to the Jim Flower World Games Fund account, in care of Pamela Burnett, at Key Bank in Jefferson. Burnett is secretary/treasurer of Ashtabula County Special Olympics.

Richard Flower says neither he nor his wife will accompany their son to Nagano. “No, this is Jim’s trip,” says Richard.

Nevertheless, Jim’s selection to represent Ohio and the United States is particularly satisfying for Richard, who along with John Able, coaches the county’s cross-country skiing team. A down-hill skier, Richard introduced cross-county skiing to the local Special Olympics program nearly two decades ago when he asked for permission to clear a seven-acre field between Happy Hearts School and Ash/Craft Industries so the athletes would have a place to ski.

The land has evolved into The Park, a training complex for local Special Olympics athletes. The Park includes a ballfield, a 16-station fitness course and a pavilion. The latter improvement was made possible by a gift from the John Mylagawa family, which owns Wheeler Manufacturing. Jim says one of the reasons he is looking forward to going to Japan is because Mrs. Mylagawa, who lives in Osaka, plans to attend the games and support Jim. The Mylagawa’s son, Yoshi, stayed with the Flower family while he was a student in the United States.

Jim trains two afternoons a week in the winter months at the Park. His father says there are eight to ten children in the program, so he does not have a lot of time to give special attention to his son during these training sessions. To help Jim prepare for Nagano and improve his technique, he will travel to a ski resort in Colorado in December for a week of training with the team’s coach, Pat Handy of Michigan. In the meantime, Jim is working on strength and endurance by staying active in other sports, including softball and bowling. He goes to the YMCA three mornings a week.

“He works out for 45 minutes straight on the machines before he goes to work,” Richard says. “I come home, crash, and read the paper.”

Jim works at Ash/Craft and for the past nine years he has been assigned to Thomas Fence, where he is part of a crew that builds cedar panels.

An athlete who enjoys competing in many different sports, Jim has earned 138

medals and 118 ribbons. This is the first time he has been invited to participate in a world event, however.

Jenner says other Ashtabula County Special Olympics athletes who have competed in world games include Jeff Schultz, who did both roller skating in the summer games and skiing in the winter. Jeff Spencer, who was on the 1990 unified softball team; Amy Turner, a roller skater; and three athletes, Ralph Hammond, power lifting; Victoria Hippely, aquatics; and Michael Sabados, bowling; who went to the summer games in New Haven, Connecticut.

She says it is especially satisfying to see Jim chosen for the honor because of the family's friendship with the Mylagawas and Richard's work with the program. "Jimmy has been in Special Olympics longer than I have," Jenner says. "This is the first time he's had the opportunity to be chosen in World Games. It is a great honor."

Sarah Bevan, a 17-year-old figure skater from Madison, will also be part of the Special Olympics Team USA at Nagano.

### **Jim Flower Skis for Team USA at the World Special Olympics March 20, 2005**

Jim Flower. "I loved everything, the people were nice, the food was great, and I got to use chopsticks."

Jim Flower, 39, of Ashtabula, crossed the finish line earlier this month to win a silver medal in the 500-meter cross-country ski race at the World Winter Special Olympic Games in Nagano, Japan. The son of Dick and Grace Flower, he began his ski career when he was 20 years old.

"We enjoyed cross- country skiing as a family," Dick said. Jim quickly proved his aptitude for cross country skiing and he began competing in Special Olympics at the local and state levels. Advancement to the World Games, which occur only once every four years, is a long road that requires commitment and perseverance.

"Jim has been medaling for a long time," Dick said. In 2004, he double medaled at the State Winter Games. "The state office called and told our local Special Olympics representative that Jim was eligible to go to the World Winter Games in Japan," Dick said.



Jim's 19-day adventure began in Columbus where the four other athletes from Ohio met up with him to board their flight to Los Angeles International Airport. It was in Los Angeles that the rest of the 274 Special Olympians from the United States met to begin their flight to Japan. Because of constant security concerns since September 11, 2001, the United States Defense Department chartered a jet for the athletes to fly safely to Japan. Once they landed at a United States Airforce Base, the athletes boarded buses that were first completely inspected by dogs, ensuring their safe arrival six hours later in Nagano. "The bus ride was long, but Japan is very pretty, especially the mountains," Jim said.

After three days of orientation and opening ceremonies, the athletes were divided up to different neighboring villages by sport. The cross-country skiers stayed in a beautiful village called Hakuba. Jim spent an evening with a local Japanese family. "I loved everything. The people were nice, the food was great, and I got to use chopsticks," he said.

Originally scheduled to compete in three events, Jim first competed in the 1k cross-country ski race where he slipped on some ice and finished seventh. The second race was the 500-meter race that won him the silver medal. His last race, a cross country relay race, was scratched due to the illness of a team mate. Besides standing up on the podium and receiving his silver medal, another exciting moment happened for Jim when he received a pair of brand-new skis. They were given to the skiers by the ski manufacturer in appreciation for participating in the games. As Jim returned to his full-time job at the Ashtabula Mall, he looked back on this time with fondness and pride.

### **Conneaut Boosts Special Olympian September 15, 2007.**

*Michael Barricklow of Conneaut and the rest of his Special Olympics softball team will compete in the state tournament in Columbus.*



*Ashtabula Star Beacon photo by Bill West. Michael Barricklow, 27, shows prowess on the field. The Ash/Craft Industries employee is the starting pitcher for the Lakers. The team's 11-2 record in league play this summer earned a state tournament berth at this season's Special Olympics soft ball team. Barricklow's prowess on the mound is a big part of the team's success, said Head Coach Joe Allen.*

# Chapter Fifteen, It Takes A Community

## Ashtabula and Ashtabula County Contributions

Happy Hearts School and Ash/Craft Industries could not have come into being and survived for 63 years without the support of the community – Ashtabula, Ashtabula County, and friends beyond the county borders. Without the many levies that city and community voters passed, Happy Hearts and Ash/Craft would have had to close its doors. Without donations and volunteers, they would not have been able to provide the quality of education and services that they have provided.

Without the enthusiasm, pride, and support of city and county citizens, Happy Hearts and Ash/Craft could not have been the center of hope for so many families with developmentally disabled and mentally retarded children. And, without them, the children in themselves would not have had the tools they needed to achieve their potential and live fulfilling lives.

It is not possible to name all of the organizations and individuals that have contributed their time, caring, and money to Happy Hearts and Ash/Craft, but an unknown or accidentally unacknowledged contribution is still a contribution, part of the bricks that helped build the foundation of the lives of so many Happy Hearts pupils and Ash/Craft workers, and families beyond their walls. Thank you to everyone who made Happy Hearts and Ash/Craft possible through the years.

## Conneaut Rotary Club Donates to Happy Hearts School



July 1963. Tom Graf, director of Happy Hearts School accepted a tape recorder and progress timer from Beret Drennen, presented in behalf of the Conneaut Rotary Club. Mr. Drennen was retiring president of the service organization. Aids in speech development, these devices were put on display at the Ashtabula County Fair at the booth sponsored by the Council for Retarded Children.

## **Knights of Columbus Dance Will Aid Happy Hearts Scouting**

*May 1964. Arrangements for a benefit dance are checked over by Dominic Landolfi, second from left. The event, to be sponsored by Knights of Columbus District 35, will aid Happy Hearts School Scouting program.*



*Looking on are Joseph Urban, Scoutmaster, left, Mrs. Myron Hudson, council president, Mrs. Elva Roux, Cub Scout leader, and Mrs. Dorothy Covert, Girl Scout leader.*

For the benefit of Happy Hearts School, Knights of Columbus District 35 will sponsor a dance on June 6. Bob Bilicic and his orchestra will play from 10 p.m. to 2 a.m. at Skateland, North Bend Road. Refreshments will be served.

District Deputy Dominic Landolfi planned the dance for the newly-organized Boy, Girl, and Cub Scouts Troops at the school. Although Happy Hearts School is the institutional representative for the Scouts, it cannot provide funds for the scouting movement since it is a tax-supported school. The scouting program is the responsibility of the Council for Retarded Children, official parent organization of the school.

Funds will be used to purchase equipment so that 13 Boy Scouts, 11 Girl Scouts and eight Cub Scouts may take part in the program. District thirty-five councils sponsoring the dance are Ashtabula, Conneaut, Geneva, and Jefferson.

### **Mrs. Edward Rose Heads Officer Slate to be installed by CCL Federation**

August 1964. Installation of 1964-1965 officers of the Ashtabula Federation of the Ohio Child Conservation League will be conducted in the community room of the Ashtabula County Savings and Loan Co.

A sewing machine and record player were accepted by Mrs. Vincent Bishop, teacher at the Happy Hearts School. Mrs. Bishop stated that since the home economics program started a year and a half ago, twenty-four boys and girls

ranging from 13 to 17 years participated in sewing and cooking classes. She displayed items the children made for Mother's Day, including cooking aprons. The record player will be used in the physical education classes at the school under the direction of Steve Woitovich.

### **Live Long Club Will Send Retarded Children to Camp**

June 9, 1964. Through the efforts of the Live Long and Like it Club, two mentally retarded children from the area will have the experience of attending summer camp.

Money for their camp entrance fees was raised in a white elephant sale held in May. Original plans called for sending one child to camp, but the sale was so successful that it will be possible to send two.

The camp, in Mentor, is directed by the Salvation Army. It offers arts and crafts, swimming, hikes, nature study, campfire get togethers, physical fitness activities and recreation. All activities are geared to the ability of the children and special individual care is given.

While the Live Long and Like It Club is sponsored by the Ashtabula City Recreation Department, the project originated with the club members and was carried out independently.



**1970s**

### **Happy Hearts Christmas Dance**

*December 23, 1970. With Christmas just around the corner, children of Happy Hearts School are treated to the music of the Majestics at the annual Christmas Dance. The group played through the courtesy of the Musicians Union. The dance is one of several such events sponsored by Ashtabula County Council for Retarded Children.*

## **Project Screen Donated**

*April 23, 1971. A projection screen is donated to the Ashtabula County Board of Mental Retardation by the Association of Ashtabula County Teachers of Trainable Retarded.*

*Carl Swartz, Chair of the Purchasing Committee, displays the screen for Wayne Reese, Director of Happy Hearts School, and Miss Alyce Lange, who is president of the Association which has also donated a one-way mirror*



## **Circus Proceeds Will Benefit Happy Hearts**

*June 30, 1971. A Circus Elephant is fed with care by David Urban at Tuesday's performance of the Wharton Circus at the Saybrook Plaza. Keeping watchful eyes on the little boy are Dr. Edward James and Mrs. Stanley Gaumer. The circus, sponsored by the Ashtabula County Council for Retarded Children, will present two shows Thursday at the VFW Grounds, Route 20, at 2 and 8*

*p.m. Proceeds will benefit Happy Hearts School's summer recreation program.*

The Wharton Circus sponsored by the Ashtabula County Council for Retarded Children will perform Thursday at the VFW grounds, Route 20.

Two shows will be given, one at 2 p.m. and another at 8 p.m. Proceeds will benefit the summer recreation program at Happy Hearts School which runs twice a week for six weeks. Thirty-two students attend, ranging in ages from three to seventeen. There are ten counselors and a director employed by the program.

ACCRC founded Happy Hearts School in 1955. Although the school is now tax supported, the Council works on behalf of the total program. It sponsors extras that taxpayer monies cannot be used for.

Due to rain, a free show was presented Tuesday at the Saybrook Plaza. Tickets for Tuesday's schedule show will be valid for either of Thursday's shows.

### **Ashtabula Star Beacon Editorial**

Friday, October 15, 1971

#### **In Our Opinion Program Would Suffer**

There are probably places in Ohio which would benefit from the takeover of programs for mentally retarded children by the State Department of Education. Ashtabula County is not one of those places.

Ohio officials have been studying the court ruling which said Pennsylvania's mentally retarded children should be included in the state's free public education system.

It seems Ashtabula County and its Happy Hearts School would already fit the definition of a free public education system. No school system is really free of cost since taxes have to support them.

In Ashtabula County's case, the source of income is threefold. The largest amount comes from a seven-tenths of a one mill levy which county voters approved. Happy Hearts school also gets tuition payments from the public schools. And it receives some state funds. The income in all cases is from taxes—local, county, and state in origin.

Ashtabula County would suffer from state administration of the program simply because it is unlikely the quality of programs dictated by the state would meet that maintained here currently. And much of the money which now finds its way into the local program would be siphoned off for state administration costs.

The response was refreshing from voters some years back when Happy Hearts sought a bond issue for a new school and a levy for operating costs. The result is the program now carried out in Kingsville.

It was Senate Bill 169 voted about four years ago which said that counties of the state must establish boards of mental retardation and programs for the handicapped children. The law made the boards answerable primarily to county commissioners.

In Ashtabula County's case, for example, it was the board of county commissioners which submitted the tax issues to pay for the school and operation.

We imagine there are many counties in the state where programs for the mentally retarded are not adequate.

Ashtabula County has an excellent program and the voters here are primarily responsible for that excellence.

it is rare indeed to find school programs with unanimous public support. We are convinced the success of Happy Hearts rests on its local identity.

It can only suffer from state takeover.



*April 8, 1976. The Carlisle Teen Board recently held a fashion show for students at Happy Hearts School in Kingsville. Two board members participating were Julie Stevens and Bettina Braun (seated left and right), Standing are (from left) Susan Crawford, Carlisle's teen board adviser; Happy Hearts students Patty Crofoot and Annette Bluhm; and teacher Mrs. Dorothy Bishop.*

**1980**

### **Ashtabula Exchange Club Presents Summer Sunshine Special at Happy Hearts School**

Members of the Exchange Club of Ashtabula provided a "Sunshine Special" to the students and staff of Happy Hearts School. Among the day's events were races, hay rides, and a picnic lunch. Balloons were distributed by President Floyd Culver, who was dressed in clown costume. Mike Kahanea, chairman of the event, awarded the race participants with special prizes. Each student also was given a memento of the day. About thirty members of the club attended the picnic luncheon and participated in the day's events. Reggie Kirk is coordinator of the club's youth services.

About 150 Happy Hearts students were served lunch, given hay and pony rides, and awarded prizes as part of the Exchange Club's Youth Service Program. The event was coordinated by Mike Kahanea of the Exchange Club and Ann Zeitler of Happy Hearts School.

## **Ohio Association for Retarded Citizens Recognizes St. John Senior High School**

November 1980

The Ohio Association for Retarded Citizens recognized St. John Senior High School for outstanding efforts on behalf of the mentally retarded citizens of Ashtabula County through presentation of a certificate. Charles Thomas, president of the Ashtabula County Council for Retarded Citizens presented a certificate to Don Cannell of St. John School. Instructors Sister Mary Joy and Mrs. Stanley Gaumer both teach inter-faith religion classes to the mentally handicapped.

### **A Prayer for the Retarded**

(From the program of the Annual Happy Hearts Benefit Dance, February 28, 1981)

Inspire us, O God with such a deep love of the retarded that we will be actively concerned for their welfare as well as that of all the mentally deficient for time and for eternity.

Teach us to show, by word and deed, the same zealous interest in protecting and furthering the happiness of these special children of God as we would do for ourselves.

Guide and strengthen the School Director, the teachers, the members of the Parent Council, and all others in high positions and low, who are entrusted with the task of protecting for all the retardates those rights which come from You and You alone.

Teach us likewise to be worthy instruments in sharing with the mentally handicapped—Your children and our brothers---the same peace, freedom, and security with which you have blessed us.

Amen

### **A Prayer from Retarded People for “Normal” People**

Inspire them, O God, with such deep humility that they do not feel superior to us, because they aren't. You created all of us to love, teach, and learn from each other.

Help us show them through our daily lives that their own lives are filled with



simple blessings like walking, talking, thinking, and being without the extra effort it sometimes takes us to do the same things. Help us treat them with the dignity that they do not always extend to us.

Give us the strength to defend ourselves when some of the more enlightened ones think they can make fun of us, torment, and abuse us. Sustain us with love and forgiveness. Help us overcome our anger at those who think they have a right to mistreat us because we are different or because they think we are stupid. We are not.

Open our eyes and hearts more widely and deeply to Your love, so we can pass it on to them through our interactions with them. We all need to love each other better.

Amen



*Leos Roar Through Ashtabula and Ashtabula County, Wednesday, June 15, 1983. Today, on the fifth anniversary of its charter, Kingsville's Leo Club has seventeen members. officers for the club are (left to right) Orville Pickett, treasurer; Claude Gaumer, president elect.; Jerry Manes, past president; and Jerry Russell, secretary. Group leaders are Ken Harley of Ashtabula and Albert Rushton of North Kingsville. Photo by Vern Fuchs*

### Blue Note

March 4, 1955. Happy Hearts School opened at the Methodist Church in a 9:30 to 1:30 timeframe. There were eight pupils enrolled. The teacher was Mrs. Charles Bennett and her assistant was Mrs. Scott Tarleton. The dream of Nadine and Gene Moroski along with the other parents in their first organization meeting was on its way to becoming a reality.

### ***Dotty May Demonstrates Bowling Technique***



*September 27, 1990. A Helping Hand. Helping Ashtabula County Nursing Home resident Lyman Cornish with the proper technique for using the new bowling ball with a handle donated by the Kiwanis Club is Kings Lanes proprietor Dotty May as Kiwanis Club Secretary Willard Giddings looks on. Dotty already hosts a League for Handicapped Bowlers on Saturday mornings and is interested in opening up other opportunities for wheelchair bowlers and otherwise handicapped athletes, as well as proving the necessary equipment. Interested parties should call Kings Lanes or Jill Dudas. Ashtabula Star Beacon photo by Jim Matthews.*

### **Popcorn for Sale**



*May 12, 1994. Happy Hearts School is selling popcorn popped by the "Popcorn Gang" in Mary Ellen Bargerhuff's class. The money is used to offset class field trips and other project expenses. The Association for Retarded Citizens (ARC) recently donated a new commercial type popper to aid the students in learning employability skills. Student Hans Stoltz dumps out a fresh batch as Mary Ellen Bargerhuff (left) and ARC officers Kris DeCaro and*

*Nadine Moroski watch the operation. Jim Matthews took the Ashtabula Star Beacon photo.*

## **Knights of Columbus Campaign**

*September 15, 1991. Bruno Kohowski (left), chairman of the Knights of Columbus*



*Measure-Up Campaign presents the proceeds from the Knights annual fundraiser to Charles Harbert, executive director of Ashtabula County Residential Services and ACRS Board members Charlotte Lovas; Betty Dickson; and Dorothy Bishop. The local Maples homes benefit from the campaign. Diana Lewis took the photo for the Ashtabula Star Beacon.*

## **2000s**



## **Special Olympics Donation**

*May 20, 1994. Special Olympics Donation. Ashtabula County Special Olympics received a \$250 donation from the Harbor Moose Lodge 558 Free and Accepted Masons toward the cost of attending the Ohio*

*Summer Olympics. From left are Jill Jenner, local coordinator for Special Olympics; Joe Lovas of Moose 558 and Pamela Barnett for Special Olympics. Ashtabula Star Beacon photo by Jim Matthews.*

## Discussing Plans for a United Commercial Traveler's Donation



*Discussing plans for the \$600 donation given to Happy Hearts School and Ash/Craft Industries by Lake Shore Council No. 330 United Commercial Travelers are (left to right) Duane Searl, UTC senior counselor; James Giannell, Happy Hearts Principal; James Billy, UTC past senior counselor; and Larry Korland, Ash Craft Director of Adult Services. The money will be spent for Christmas presents for students of the school and employees of the Ash/Craft Workshop. Photo by Herb Grant.*

## Knights of Columbus Donate Funds to Happy Hearts November 7, 2004



Geneva-Madison Council 5286 of the Knights of Columbus donated \$721 dollars to Happy Hearts School. Pictured from left are Carl Broberg, Grand Knight of the Knights of Columbus, Mike DeMarino, Director of Education at Happy Hearts School, Mike Kahance, Past Grand Knight of the Knights of Columbus, Jill Jenner, Special Olympics Coordinator, and

Anne Zeitler, Superintendent of the Ashtabula County Board of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities. The Knights of Columbus also presented \$721 dollar checks to Broadmoor School in Mentor, and Ashtabula County Special Olympics as part of its state-wide spring “Measure-Up Campaign” to raise funds for various charities and agencies that provide services for people with developmental disabilities.

Happy Hearts has used past donations to purchase playground equipment and will use the new gift to purchase therapy and recreation equipment. Special Olympics will use the funds to sponsor competitions in Nordic skiing, bowling, basketball, and swimming.

### **Let Us Eat at Massucci Field!**



*June 19, 2010. Clients from Ash/Craft, Special Olympic officials, and an Ashtabula County representative pose with one of two picnic tables built and donated by Ash/Craft Industries to Massucci Field (Counterclockwise around first table from bottom left) Joe Allen, Special Olympics softball coach; Damian Kingston; Ron Burlingame, Special Olympics softball coach; Bill Jenner, Special Olympics organizer; and Claude Gaumer. (From left, clockwise around top table) Adam Henson; Jeff Spencer; Jim Flower; Dan Juhota, Ashtabula baseball field attendant; Dick Flower; David*

*Baker; and Bill Campbell. Ashtabula Star Beacon photo by Warren Dillaway.*

## Special Story

### **Three Friends: Scrap Booking Newspaper Clippings About Happy Hearts and Ash Craft and Community**

*Nadine Moroski(left) and Pat Hunter work on scrap books to preserve the history of Happy Hearts School and Ash/Craft Industries.*



*Pat Hunter (left) and Inez Gaumer working to preserve Happy Hearts and Ash/Craft history through newspaper clippings.*



Three friends living in three different places formed three bridges and helped create and connect Happy Hearts School and Ash/Craft Industries from their beginnings to span the 1950s to 2018. Each gave birth to a son with special needs: Pat is Robert's mother;

Nadine is Larry's mother; and Inez is Claude's mother. When doctors told them that their sons had no chance of developing normally and advised them to put their children in institutions, they resolved that they would work as hard and long as it took to give their sons the chance to achieve as much as possible and look forward to a future.

Nadine and Gene Moroski followed through on their vision for a school for their son Larry and in 1954, joined with other parents from Ashtabula and Ashtabula County to make their dream a reality. Later, Inez and Stanley Gaumer sought the same future for their son Claude, and Pat and Joseph Hunter for their son, Robert. For more than fifty years they worked to ensure a future for their own children and the children of other Ashtabula and Ashtabula County parents of children with special needs.

The list of the tangible achievements of the three friends and other like-minded parents and community people is a long one. It includes Happy Hearts School and

its satellites; the Park; the Playground; and Ash/Craft Sheltered Workshop and its community outreach. The list has subdivisions like the summer camps for disabled students; the Ash/Craft Greenhouse; the Happy Hearts and Ash/Craft dances; the nationally recognized Orff Band; participating in the Special Olympics for many years; participating in ARC; and the years of memberships on the MR/DD and Ash/Craft Boards.

The scrapbook clippings are themselves bridges between the Ashtabula County Board of Developmental Disabilities and its work in the city and county, including Happy Hearts School and Ash/Craft industries and the Ashtabula County newspapers. Most of the newspaper clippings are of stories from dedicated Ashtabula Star Beacon reporters, but a few from the Jefferson Gazette and the Conneaut News-Herald with equally dedicated reporters are mixed in with the Star Beacon. Without each other, the newspapers and the MR/DD Board could not have told the story of Happy Hearts and Ash/Craft. Without dedicated and caring reporters, the stories of Happy Hearts and Ash/Craft would have been mostly confined to word of mouth.

The children and young adults of Happy Hearts and the adults of Ash/Craft Industries are the most important tangible assets, the most important legacy, of these three friends and so many others like them. They are their parents' legacy, the MR/DD Board legacy, part of the Ashtabula and Ashtabula County legacy and beyond that. They are living, touchable proof that people with handicaps have potential and if it is developed it can benefit their families and communities. Bridges sometimes sag or collapse like the Ashtabula County Railroad bridge, but citizens working together can rebuild and maintain bridges and firmly cross them far into the future.

## Blue Notes

“The children and young adults of Happy Hearts and the adults of Ash/Craft Industries are the most important tangible assets, the most important legacy.”

# Chapter 16: Recognition

## History of the Program for the Mentally Retarded in Ashtabula County- 1954-1980

1950s

In March 1954, a group of parents met to explore possibility of developing a school for the retarded in Ashtabula County. There was no law to educate such children.

The Ashtabula County Council for Retarded Citizens was formed. The Council organized and equipped classes, hired teachers, raised funds through many projects and established a constant program of public education . They opened classes in 1955 with seven students in a local church.

In 1956, the Ashtabula Council for Retarded Citizens was incorporated as a non-profit organization and began to receive financial assistance from the State, from the United Appeal; and tuition from local boards of education for children from their districts.

The local association is a member of the Ohio Association for Retarded Citizens, giving strength to moving the program forward for legislation and a long-range development of a total program for the retarded.

The Council continued to operate classes, and in 1959, the voters of Ashtabula County passed an operating levy. In 1960, by state law, the operation of the community classes became the responsibility of the Child Welfare Board, who employed a director to operate the program. In the years that followed, a sheltered workshop pre-school, and home visitor programs were added in addition to several classrooms.

In 1966, the voters of Ashtabula County approved a bond issue for the construction of a new school building. Ground-breaking ceremonies were held in July of 1967. Later in 1967, legislation was passed by the State of Ohio creating local boards of mental retardation to replace the authority of the Child Welfare Board in the operation of the community classes for the Retarded and Community Centers of Retardation.

Also, in 1967, a Sheltered Workshop Board was appointed to comply with federal



and state legislation. This functions as an advisory board to Ash/Craft.

In the past decade, a hot lunch program begun, a fleet of 13 school buses purchased, operated, and maintained, and a summer camp program initiated. Nursing, speech therapy, psychological services, a cooperative agreement for a residential program, home training services, a greenhouse operation, infant stimulation classes, a new Ash/Craft building, and school chartering by the Ohio Department of Education have been but a few of the major highlights of the 1970s to the present. Total staff is approaching one hundred employees.

Ash/Craft Industries Incorporated is a non-profit corporation providing habilitation services and sheltered employment to moderately or severely retard or developmentally disabled adults 16 years of age and older from Ashtabula County.

As part of the Ashtabula County Board of Mental Retardation, the overall goal of our program is to provide each adult with the opportunity to reach his or her potential. This goal is achieved under operational guidelines established by the Ashtabula County Board of Mental Retardation, the Ash/Craft Board of Directors, and the Ohio Division of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities.

The Advisory Board, now called the Ash/Craft Board of Directors, was originally formed under the charter of the Local Parents Organization.

In a few years, the rapid growth of the adult population and expanded programming necessitated plans for a new building for Ash/Craft. The plans were formulated in 1975 and the new construction of the Ash/Craft building began in the spring of 1977. Ash/Craft Industries Incorporated began operating in its present building in March 1978. The modern 20,000 square foot facility was designed to provide habilitation services and sheltered employment to approximately two hundred students.

The building includes a large work area, an auto bus garage, an adult activity center, a daily living skills and hygiene area, a multipurpose room and cafeteria and a general office area. With a well-trained professional staff, each enrollee is assessed for his/her abilities and needs, and individual habilitation plans are written and maintained with the goal that each person will be able to live a more fulfilling, rewarding, and self-sufficient life.

From its humble and dedicated and hopeful beginning in 1955 with seven students, we are very proud to celebrate 25 years of growth and achievement made possible by community support, dedicated parents, a professional staff, and the hopes,

dreams, and hard work of an original group of parents who had a dream, set a goal, and saw it through to fruition. The Ashtabula County Council for Retarded Citizens continues to provide support and direction today, and the future holds more dreams and goals achievable in Ashtabula County.

### **Happy Hearts Hair Styling 1960s**



March 11, 1962

New hair styling for students at Happy Hearts School was donated by Petite House of Beauty, Lake Avenue, Friday. In the chairs (left to right) are Linda Meinke at Conneaut and Wanda Hopkins, also of Conneaut. Happy Hearts teacher and operators are (left to right) Mrs. Vincent Bishop, teacher; Mrs. Lonnie Dietz, operator; Mrs. Marion Dunkin, teacher, and Miss Patricia Morana, operator. Ashtabula Star Beacon photo.



*Happy Hearts Swimming  
Program at the YM-YWCA*

*Children of Happy Hearts  
School enjoy swimming at the  
YM-YWCA's pool. Stephen  
Woitovich, physical director  
at Happy Hearts, and Miss  
Marjorie Taft, physical  
director at the YM-YWCA,  
coordinate the program.*

1970s

### **Conference at Happy Hearts and Ashcraft**

We extend a warm welcome to all and hope you will profit from the day we planned. If you can take some new thoughts and usable ideas home, we shall feel rewarded for our efforts. Thank you for coming to the farthest corner of our state.

Ashtabula's Entire Staff, Happy Hearts School & Ash/Craft

9:00-10:00 A.M.- Registration- LobbyCoffee-Gymnasium

10:00 A.M.-12:00 P.M Meeting- Conference Room (Cafeteria)

Invocation: The Reverend Elmer Braun, St. John Lutheran Church, Geneva, Ohio

Remarks: Director Wayne G. Reese, Administrator, Ashtabula County Board of Mental Retardation

Keynote Address: "Language Function in the Retarded," Dr. Jay Gibson, Speech Pathologist and Audiologist, Montgomery Institute, Akron, Ohio

Language in Action- Demonstration: Dr. Gibson Question and Answer Period

12:00-1:15 P.M.- Luncheon-Gymnasium

1:20-2:00 P.M.- Discussion meetings in the following areas conducted by the teachers and supervisors:

Home Training-Miss Alyce R. Lange (Slide Presentation Room)

Developmental Class- Miss Judith May

Preschool Class-Mrs. Marta Triozzi

Primary A Class (A-6-8)- Miss Betty Hartley

Primary B Class (A-7-9)- Mrs. Kathleen Pearson

Intermediate Class-Mrs. Lucy Johnson, Mrs. Linda Pasky

Home Economics (A13-16) Mrs. Dorothy Bishop

Arts & Crafts-Miss Aili Hokkanen

Physical Education – Mr. Robert Timoeto

Pre-Workshop- Mrs. Martha Robishaw

Sheltered Workshop- Mrs. Gertrude Smith

2:00- 3:00 P.M.- Free visitation in the above areas with teachers remaining in the rooms to answer questions.

2:30- 3:00 P.M. – Slide presentation of Ashtabula County's program- Slide Presentation Room – Alyce R. Lange

Note: You are invited to visit the display of J.R. Holcomb and Company instructional materials after 2:00 P.M. in the Conference Room (Cafeteria).

Staff Administrator- Wayne G. Reese- Supervisor- Dorothy Bishop Home

Training Consultant- Alyce R. Lange Workshop Supervisor- Gertrude J. Smith

Secretary-Carolyn Mackey-Clerk-Doris Gloekler-Receptionist-Joyce Ring

Teachers Betty Hartley-----Aili Hokkanen-----Lucy Johnson----- Judith May  
 Linda Pasky Kathleen Pearson-----Martha Robishaw----- Robert  
 Timateo Marta Triozzi  
 Teacher Assistants...Edith Bitner-----Margaret Brunell ----- Effie Foy  
 Louise Miller  
 Workshop Specialists.....John Buchtinec-----Linda Nichols-----  
 Cafeteria Personnel Juanita Horst Beverly Reese  
 Maintenance John Platz  
 Bus Drivers.....Agnes Berg-----Betty Dickson-----Edna Goode ----- Ruth  
 Hadlock-----Verna Palmer----- Margaret Randa----Helen Stenback Janice  
 Winchester  
 Substitute Teachers Catherine BidwellLinda Wright

A sincere thanks to all of those who helped to make this day successful.

### Happy Hearts Folds Bandages for the Red Cross



*May 6, 1974. Charles Potti presents a scroll of appreciation for community service to Mrs. Byron Johnson, while her students and aide demonstrate the folding of bandages. From left are Mrs. Johnson; Mr. Potti; Susan Kirkinburg; Julie Morse; Mrs. Ross Smith; Mary Frances*

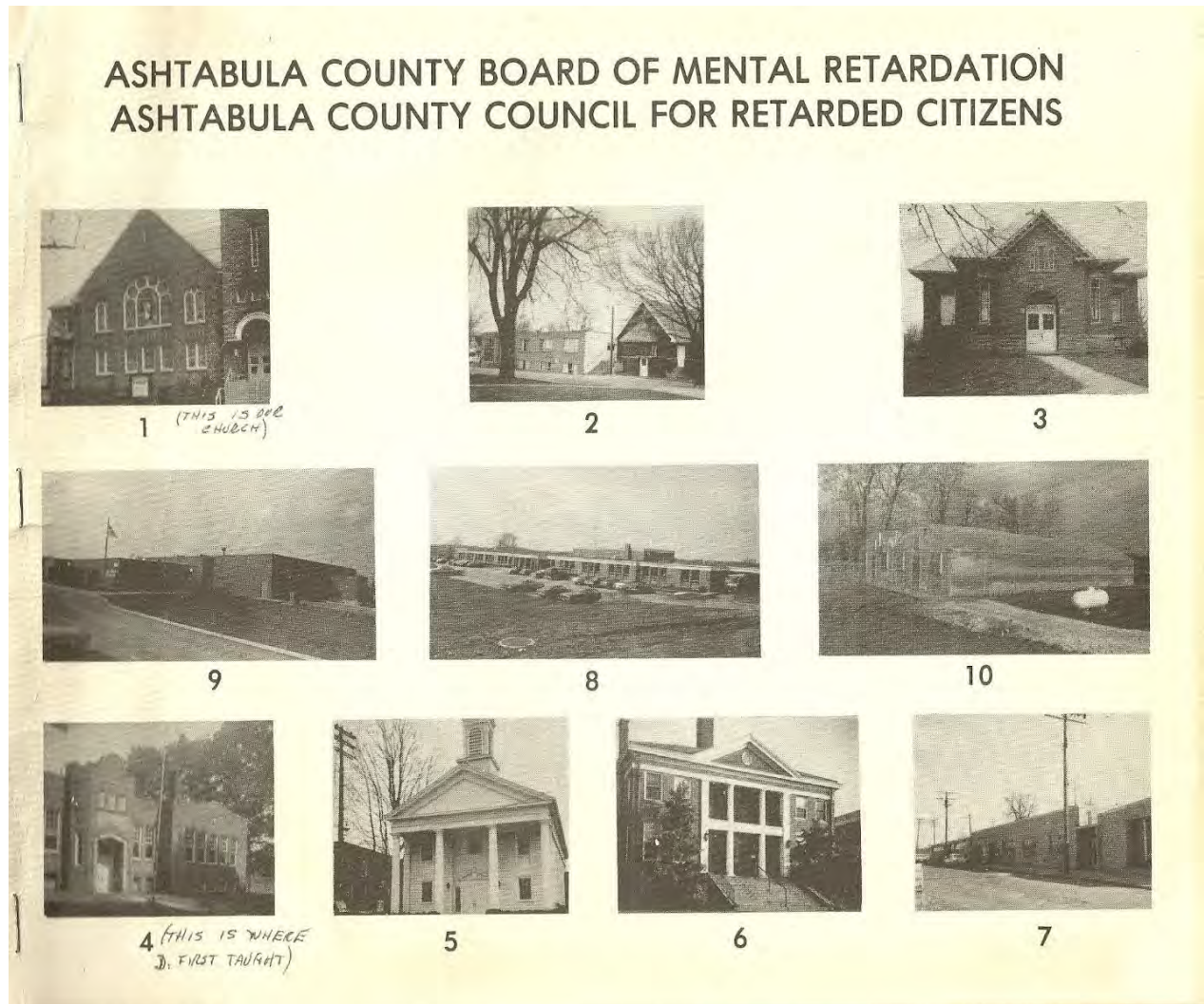
*Lacalec; and Beth Fogle.*

Four girls in the pre-shop A class at Happy Hearts School, their teacher Mrs. Byron Johnson, and aide Mrs. Ross Smith were presented with a scroll by Charles Potti on behalf of the American Red Cross in appreciation of fine service in assembling bandages and slings for Red Cross first aid classes. The girls cut and folded strips of bandages and cloth for slings. The American Red Cross supplied the materials.

Mrs. Johnson said the girls enjoyed the work, and added the school likes the

children to do a certain amount of community work in order that the students feel they are part of the community.

Mr. Potti, who is Safety Service Director of the Ashtabula County Chapter of the American Red Cross said the work was tremendously appreciated.



First Happy Heart class held in basement of Elm Avenue Methodist Church in Ashtabula.

Moved to Christian Education Building at Harris Memorial Presbyterian Church in Ashtabula.

Next, the school moved to the little school building on School Street in Kingsville.

Austinburg grade school building was the next stop for Happy Hearts School.

East Side Presbyterian Church in Ashtabula came next.

The basement of the Children's Home on Route 20 was Happy Heart's next home.

The workshop was located at Goodwill in Ashtabula for a short time.

In 1968, Happy Hearts and Ash/Craft had a permanent home on Route 84 in N. Kingsville.

Ash/Craft Industries became its own entity in 1978.

Ash/Craft Greenhouse became operational in 1980. 1980s

Program: 25th Anniversary Open House April 27, 1980

Ashtabula County Board of Mental Retardation, Ashtabula County Council for Retarded Citizens

Welcome and Introductions....Dr. Edward J. James, Chairman, Ashtabula County Board of Mental Retardation

Master of Ceremonies.....Dr. Edward J. James-----Invocation... Reverend George A.

Johnson-----Presentation of Flag.....Rep. Robert J. Boggs Acceptance of Flag...Douglas A.

Burkhardt, Supt.-----Pledge of Allegiance....Led by Leo Club ----- Remarks....Dr. Edward J. James-----Remarks....Douglas A. Burkhardt, Supt.

Remarks...Charles Thomas, President, Ashtabula County Council for Retarded Citizens

Introduction of Speaker....Douglas A. Burkhardt, Supt.-----Speaker.....Mrs. Dorothy De Bolt

Benediction-----Open House....Happy Hearts School, Ash/Craft Industries – Ash/Craft Greenhouse----- Refreshments....Cafeteria

## Bowling for the Orff Band



*July 3, 1986. Bowl for the Band. Bill Giddings, vice president of Conneaut Kiwanis, and Dotty May, owner of Kings lanes in Kingsville flank the thermometer that shows the progress made on donation for Happy Hearts School Orff Players Liberty Tour. There will be a bowl-a-thon at the Lanes at 10:00 a.m. on September 14th. Photo by Cynthia Daniels.*

## Marketing Our Schools



*July 22, 1991. Marketing our schools. Happy Hearts School of the Ashtabula County Board of MR/DD was the first recipient of an award at the annual Marketing Our Schools luncheon held in Conneaut. The award was given to teacher Natalie Peck for the reading program for 16-22-year-old with mild to moderate retardation. Pictured with Natalie are teacher assistant Barb Scott; Happy Hearts School Principal Mary Ellen Higley; Becky Phipps of Literacy Volunteers of America and*

*Rick Cozza, the Superintendent of the Ashtabula County Board of MR/DD. Sentinel photo by Nick Jezerny.*

## MR/DD Board Recognizes Employees April 13, 1992

The Ashtabula County Board of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities held its fourth annual staff recognition dinner April 2.

The dinner is held in honor of those staff at Happy Hearts School and Ash/Craft Sheltered Workshop who have given five, 10- and 20-yearsyear's service to developmentally disabled citizens of Ashtabula County.

Recognized at the dinner were:

Five years: Lorraine Bean, Joyce Carpenter, Judy Clough, Shirley Cramer, Patty Davis, Rhonda Marcinko, Betty Morrison, Linda Porcello, Ted Quirke, Teresa Tobias, and Judy Walters.

Ten years: Denise Bancroft, Sandy Bennett, Marian Flickinger, Debbie Gill, Tony Masters, and Suzi Sabo.

20 years: Shirley Howland.

Richard J. Cozza, Jr., superintendent, said that the board is "strongly committed to the highest quality of service possible and publicly recognizes their fine staff in their efforts to provide that service."



*MR/DD Employee Appreciation Dinner 1994. The Ashtabula County Board of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities held an employee appreciation dinner and awarded service pins to a number of employees. Front row from left Marian Flickinger, retiree; Mike DeMarino, 20 years;*

*Mary Ellen Higley, five years; Mary Lou Moody, 29 years, and Cindy Shearer 10 years. Back row from left, Bonnie Bashaw, Molly Matthews, Brenda Jerauld and John Sisk, five years each and Board Superintendent Richard Cozza who presented the awards. Not pictured who also received awards were Jan Church; Elaine Marcy; Peggy Pierce; Barb Scott; Pam Whittan; Pam Keep; and Tony Masters. Ashtabula Star Beacon photo by Jim Matthews.*

#### MR/DD Board Honors Employees

On December 7, 2000, the Ashtabula Board of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities held an Employee Recognition Dinner to honor its employees.

#### Twenty-five Years of Service

Michael DeMarino; Sandra Kanicki; Mary Lou Moody

#### Twenty Years of Service

Susan Lillie; Verna Osburn; Carolyn Porter; Trudy Robison

#### Fifteen Years of Service

Terri Harchalk; Cynthia Shearer

#### Ten Years of Service

Bonnie Bashaw; Marcia Palm; Barbara Scott; Joan Sisk; Pat Whitten

#### Five Years of Service

Joan Arcaro; Alice Cook; Heather Hayford; Modris Krumins; Theresa Spang

#### Special Recognition

Congratulations to employees who retired during the year 2000:

Eileen Magnesun; Shirley Cramer; Lois Watson

Ashtabula County MR/DD Recognized for Accomplishments





June 26, 2005. Pictured from left, are Ron Tate, President of the Ashtabula County Board of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities; Joe Moroski, Ashtabula County Commissioner; Anne Zeitler, Superintendent of the Ashtabula

County Board of MR/DD; Don Bashaw, Assistant Director of the Ohio Department of MR/DD; Robert Boggs and Debbie Newcomb, Ashtabula County Commissioners.

At a recent meeting with the Ashtabula County Board of Commissioners, Don Bashaw, assistant deputy director of the Ohio Department of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities, recognized the local MR/DD Board for the six commendations received during the state's accreditation review.

#### Ash/Craft Consumer Recognition Dinner September 25, 2012

The Ashtabula County Council for Retarded Citizens and Ash/Craft Industries, Inc. sponsored a Recognition Dinner for Ash/Craft consumers (workers) on September 25, 2012. Director of Adult Services Lynda Perry presented certificates to consumers working at Ash/Craft from 45 to 25 years of service.

All of the 45-year employees honored were members of the first Happy Hearts classes that began in 1955. Diane Dickson was in Mrs. Dorothy Bishop's class; Rena Hudson was in Miss Barbara White's class; Mary Kehoe was in Mrs. Sisson's class; John Pickett was in Miss Barbara White's class; Orville Pickett was in Mrs. Bishop's class; and Michael Sabados was in Mrs. Sisson's class. While Ash/Craft has placed consumers in the community at large based on their abilities and interests, many Happy Hearts graduates move on to work in the main sheltered workshop environment.

Ash/Craft Production Manager Jim Hornbeck and Board Member Patricia Hunter spoke about the workings and history of the sheltered workshop. Pat Hunter emphasized that despite name changes the Ashtabula County Council for Retarded Citizens forged a parallel relationship with Ash/Craft Industries, Inc. through the years. She said the Recognition event came about because several people felt that it would be appropriate to honor the Ash/Craft consumers who had worked there twenty-five years or more.

Presenting some history, she said that ARC started in March 1954 when ten parents met and formed ACCRC, the Ashtabula County Council for Retarded Children, with the object of educating and training their disabled children. With fund raising and donations, the first class started in September 1955. The ARC provided most of the funding by donations and other means and ran the school until June 1960, when voters passed a levy to assist with funding. Through the years the ARC has been there to donate to and work for successful levies, donate funds for equipment and supplies, and sponsor Boy Scout and Girl Scout summer camps, dances graduation festivities and the playground fund to name a few.

45 Years

Diane Dickson-Rena Hudson-Mary Kehoe-John Pickett-Orville Pickett-Michael Sabados

43 Years.....Nancy Freeman

40 Years.....Ralph Jerry Russell

38 Years.....Beth Fogle

37 Years.....Joe Matriciano

36 years.....Ed Cook.....Caude Gaumer

35 Years.....Robert Hunter-----Dan LaManna-----Tom McElroy.....Noreen Ruffo

34 Years.....Dan Morano-----Mathew Russell-----Rodney Stevens.....Suzane Wilson

33 Years...Ron Cole---David Giddings--Duane Heaven--Tomasina Tyner.. Cathy Vale

32 Years....Sherri Baumgardner-----Terri Church-----Steve Hinkle ----Anne Lovas-----Brad Millsbaugh----- Joe Ringler-----Michael Spore   Mari-jo Wilson

31 Years....Tim Bates-----Barbara Costello----Tammy Hayes----Dick Sheffield.... Ray Wortman

30 Years....Brian Flaughter... Lela Holcomb

29 Years...Dan Mast .....Alan McGoon

28 Years...Mary Bento... Tim Starkey

27 Years   Jennifer McMahan..... Jill Rogers

26 Years... Amy Turner

25 years....Kim Drodz-----Melissa Feke---- Judy Kohowski,,,,Audrey Thomas

### **Ashtabula County Board of Developmental Disabilities Superintendents**

G. Thomas Graf (1965-1967)

Wayne Reese (1967 – October 1973)

William Hall (February 1974 – 1979)

Douglas Burkhardt (1979 – 1985)

Richard Cozza (1985 – 1999)

Larry Korland (1999 – 2002)

Anne Zeitler (2002 – -2018)

### **Ashtabula County Council for Retarded Citizens Past Presidents**

Gene Moroski... 1954-1960

Winthrop Davies... 1961

Woodrow Utter... 1962

Agnes Berg..... 1963

Elsie Hudson..... 1964

Paula (Wilson) Bennear..... 1965

Joseph Hunter... .. 1966-1967

Dr. Edward James... 1968-1969

Fred Ruffo... .. 1970

Inez Gaumer ..... 1971-1972

Patricia Hunter..... 1973-1974

Biddiana Kohowski ..... 1975-1977

Charles Thomas.... 1978-1980

### **Ashtabula County Board of Developmental Disabilities Board Members**

1967-2018

Nancy Alexander-----Pamela Baker-----James Barnes ----- Rosemary Bernato

Delores Bonds

Richard Bryant-----Miriam Cartner-----Bernadette Cimorelli-----Ron Colby-----

Mary Ellen Coneglio-----Don Cosner-----Ronald Cramer Rev. John Cuthbert

Kristene DeCaro-----Lisa Ebersole-----Dora Ferritto-----Thomas Feritto---- Jean  
Fields

Jeffrey Ford-----Larry Foreman-----Inez Gaumer-----Thomas Gwilt---- Liisa Hake

Douglas Hedberg-----Mary Ellen Higley-----Brett Horvath ----- Joseph Hunter

Judge Calvin Hutchins-----Dr. Edward James-----Charles Jeffords -----Nancy Koski

Biddiana Kohowski-----Father Daniel Kulesa-----Edward Lawler -----John Lovas

Joseph Lovas-----David Lusk-----Elaine Martin-----Barbara McClure---- Andrew

Misiak

Nancy Mohrmann-----Chris Newcomb ---- Janet Neville--Claude Nicholson  
Jerry Peterson-----Margaret Pratt-----Kim Ryel-----Lisa Scott ---- William Searcy  
Elizabeth Sims-----Ron Tate-----Robert Taylor-----Charles Thomas---- Victor Topo  
Janet Vettel-----Charles Von Tesmar----- Donald Zeller

## Special Story

### Teacher Barb Turchetta and her Class



“There is a tendency for people to forget that children and people with handicaps are individuals who have specialized talents and personalities. There is so much that all people can learn from those people who have handicaps. People need to open their minds to what they can learn from someone else. People sometimes think that because kids are handicapped they don’t have individual abilities and talents, but they each have something to offer. Some of them are better on the computer. Others are better at writing. And they learn to help each other with these skills.”

Barb Turchetta

## Blue Note

### Adelphia Cable

November 11, 2000

Students at Happy Hearts School who receive physical therapy will benefit from a recent donation to the school. Employees of Adelphia Cable got together this summer and held a bake sale and raffle. They raised more than \$1,000 and donated the money to Happy Hearts to purchase physical therapy equipment.

# Chapter Seventeen: Peeking at Programs

Infant Stimulation...

September 30, 1979

A Better future



“Just because a child starts with the program doesn’t mean it will be a long-term situation,” says Russell S. Grippi, Program Coordinator. He said some children have gone into the program immobile, unable to do anything for themselves. After being in the program for a while, the children started acting similar to other children at their age level. September 30, 1979

The birth of a baby can become an emotional struggle when the new parents learn their child has handicaps. The infant stimulation program not only helps the child develop but shows the parents how to help too.

Happy Hearts Program Aids Developmentally Delayed Kids, and Their Parents

by Joni Kozesky, Sunday paper reporter

Kingsville. A baby’s cry at the moment of birth can mean joy beyond compare for a mother and father. But for parents of developmentally delayed children, the cry can also mean the beginning of an emotional struggle. “It puts an end to the term it will never happen to us.”

Seven parents of developmentally delayed children in Ashtabula County told the Sunday Paper they felt completely alone when learning of their children’s problem. “I thought it was the end of the world said Marie Harley of Ashtabula.

However, the Infant Stimulation Program of Happy Hearts School assists the parents in their struggle while providing training for their children. Instructor Diane Keep and assistant instructor Bev Skarlinski work with the children three hours a week helping them achieve their full potential.

The developmentally delayed are those children who are not acting like youngsters at their age level. Children could be lagging in certain areas such as motor

development and eye and hand coordination. “It does not necessarily mean they are mentally handicapped,” said Happy Hearts Superintendent Douglas Burkhardt who added it is hard to determine intelligence at such a young age.

\ It is important to get to these children when they are young before school age, because that is when they need the help. If you do not, it could affect their learning later on in life,” said Burkhardt. Through use of equipment, therapy, and training, some of the children once thought to be “floppy babies,” vegetables” have learned to function equivalent to their age groups.

The free program involves the parents teaching them techniques to train their children in their homes; therefore, the program can continue throughout the week. Parents can also become involved in activities such as social gatherings, field trips, workshops, and counseling sessions.

“Every day is precious and if you lose a day it hurts” said Cecilia Erdman of North Kingsville, a mother involved in the program. “The attitudes of parents should be that of acceptance because the sooner you discover the problem the sooner something can be done.”

The parents have become a closely-knit group according to Russell S. Grippi, program coordinator. “People here are friends,” said June Lindgren of Ashtabula. “Nobody else knows what we’re going through, but here we all share the same feelings.”

A special room at Happy Hearts is set aside for the parents. This allows them to meet while the children are in the classroom. A total of twelve children are involved in the program which was developed in February of 1976 and funded by Title I. Its purpose is to help developmentally delayed children reach their full potential by creating a stimulating environment and guiding their interaction with the environment.

Developmentally delayed county children from birth to 18 months are eligible for the program. Three sessions two days a week are held in a brightly decorated Happy Hearts classroom complete with toys, stuffed animals, and training equipment. Much of the equipment was donated by the Kingsville Area Lions Club, said Grippi.

Some “toys” can be misleading to persons, especially an oversized beach ball which is actually a neuro developmental training ball. This ball is used to train

children to hold up their heads. A child is placed on top of the ball by an instructor. The instructor uses her other hand to slightly roll the ball causing the child to lift up his head. Other equipment includes a standing prone board and table, special adaptive walkers, chairs, crawlers, and wedges.

The importance of training in the early years was a reason for the program. “Just because a child starts with the program doesn’t mean it will be a long-term situation,” Grippi said. He added that some children have gone into the program immobile, unable to do anything for themselves. After being in the program for a while, the children started acting similarly to other children at their age level.

“An early start could mean a child’s ability to attend public schools,” said William T. Hall, former Happy Hearts Superintendent. “And I’ve seen that happen.” Before children are enrolled, they must have a comprehensive medical examination. The examinations are given usually at Rainbow Babies and Children Hospital in Cleveland or Cleveland Metropolitan Hospital. After the data is compiled, they are assessed to determine how severe the developmental delay is and the reasons why it has occurred.

An individualized program is designed for a child using input from the parents, a doctor, the program’s instructors, Grippi, a physical therapy consultant, a language development therapist, and a registered nurse. After a child is in the program, they are assessed on a regular basis to determine their improvement.

Dr. Robert Blinker, director of the Comprehensive Care Program at Cleveland Metropolitan Hospital, and his staff conduct a special monthly clinic for the children at the school. Grippi said this saves the parents money, time, and effort.

Dr. Seung C. Karl, a pediatrician in Conneaut, has made many referrals to the program. He said when he discovers a Down Syndrome case at Brown Memorial Hospital he always suggests the program to the infant’s parents.

Dr. Karl acts as the physician for the majority of children involved in the classes. “It’s a fantastic facility,” said Dr. Karl who had previously worked in research at the New York State Institute for the Mentally Retarded. He credits the program’s success to the “occupational dedication” of the persons involved with it. “Before, there wasn’t any training for these children and many would stay at low levels of development.”

Right after Cory was born, Dr. Karl told me had had Downs Syndrome,” said Mrs. Erdman. She entered her son in the program when he was 27 days old. Cory has since developed similar to a child at his age. “He makes messes like any other

child and he can even swim,” said Mrs. Erdman.

Parents of six other developmentally delayed children involved in the program said they have noticed definite improvements in their children. Their children are Michael Courtney and Elizabeth Harley, both with Downs Syndrome; Jennifer Drew with a developmental delay; Linda Atkins, developmentally slow with traits of cerebral palsy; Trevor Lundgren, cerebral palsy; and Charlie Smith, Sotos Syndrome.

According to Michael’s mother Barbara Courtney of Jefferson, a heart problem was a factor in holding up Michael’s development. In addition to Down’s Syndrome, Michael was a floppy baby, having severely weak muscles. After heart surgery, Michael was enrolled in the school and he has improved tremendously,” she said. The instructors have taught Mrs. Courtney ways to exercise Michael’s muscles. The program not only stimulates the kids, but it also teaches parents how to work at home.”

Mrs. Harley, Elizabeth’s mother, said doctors informed her Elizabeth would not be sitting up until she was eight months old, but at six months Elizabeth was doing everything a six-month- old baby would do including sitting up, Mrs. Harley said. “She also rolls over, crawls, reaches for objects, and can say dada,” Mrs. Harley said. She does not believe Elizabeth could do these things without the program or the training she received from the instructors which enabled her to work with Elizabeth at home.

Jennifer’s hearing and vision problems are factors in her developmental delay, said her mother Elaine Drew, of Geneva. But since the program Mrs. Drew said she is noticed a “500 percent improvement from when I had her at home.”

Beth Atkins has noticed many changes in her daughter since taking her to the classes. She couldn’t chew at all and now she’s holding a cup and can feed herself said Mrs. Atkins. “Her temper tantrums have subsided since she came here and she responds to everything.”

Mrs. Atkins realized Linda had a problem when she was not responding well. She also bases Linda’s improvement on the training given to the parents to help their children at home. “I don’t know what I would have done if I hadn’t brought her here,” she said.

Trevor is known as the miracle baby at school. Trevor’s mother June Lundgren of Ashtabula said when Trevor was five hours old he was transferred to Akron



Children's Hospital and "we were told we would never bring him home. He would die there."

However, Trevor did live and he was brought home at seven weeks. At five months Mrs. Lundgren said he was a floppy baby, like a rag doll. He could not lift his head or move his arms. He had just lay there." Now Trevor can walk using furniture for support, sit up, hold up his head and "he refuses to let anybody feed him," she said. "This proves the point that the children have progressed by coming into the program," Mrs. Lundgren added.

Charles has Sotos Syndrome, which means he will be extremely large all of his life. Charlie's parents, Mr. and Mrs. Charles Smith of Ashtabula said before entering into the program, he was a vegetable."

"Now Charles can talk, he's learning how to walk, he sits up and has good head control," said his parents. "Doctors we've spoken to are floored with his progress," said his parents. "We are not sympathetic towards Charlie. We treat him like our other two children to help him learn."

"Now when people ask why Charlie's head is so big we're proud to tell everyone about his progress, even in the grocery store," said Mrs. Smith.

"When many children start this program, they were passive and had little personality," she said. But each has developed their own personality and even though they cannot talk yet they seem aware of what goes on around them."

The following goals were set up by Happy Hearts for the program designed to make the program successful for the child and parents," said Russ Grippi. They include expanding the child's awareness and interaction with the animate and inanimate environment, enabling the family to become involved with professionals in the child's emotional planning and the program's implementation, providing families with emotional support, and acting as a resource for information about the child's handicap.

The final goal is educating the community of the importance of early intervention and helping them to understand the mentally retarded and developmentally delayed child and his family.



*Following through is a major part of the total development of the child in “infant stimulation.” Bev Skarlinski, infant stimulation program aide at Happy Hearts School, follows through with Jacob Peterson to enhance his range of motion through continuing physical therapy. Photo by Sue Loomis. June 3, 1984.*



**Happy Hearts Early Intervention Program, 2000**

*Kevin Kolman works with his Happy Hearts primary school teacher, Michelle Bentley. Ashtabula Star Beacon photo by Warren Dillaway.*

**Happy Hearts Day Care Effort Called Success  
June 17, 1990  
Ashtabula Star Beacon reporter Carl E. Feather**

wrote that both participants in the two-year pilot program between the Ashtabula

County Day Care Center and Happy Hearts School considered the experiment a success and that they were anticipating expanding the program in the next year.

According to Richard J. Cozza, Jr., Superintendent of the Ashtabula County Board of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities, two preschool classes relocated from Happy Hearts to Ashtabula County Day Care Center, located in the former Lincoln Elementary School building in Ashtabula Township. He said that seven out of ten students finishing Happy Hearts pre-school are eligible to enter some type of public-school program, but they often lack social skills needed to interact with public school students. Happy Hearts staff and administrators hoped that combining the two groups of students would ease the transition to public school for the children.

He added that combining the two groups also eased space problems at Happy Hearts and in Ashtabula County Schools as many districts have consolidated and closed school buildings. The Ashtabula County Board of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities leased two rooms in the Lincoln building owned by Buckeye Local Schools for \$250 per month. Transporting the students from Happy Hearts to Lincoln each day only resulted in minor transportation costs because the runs were made as part of the regular paid time of the drivers.

Tammy McTrusty, administrator of Ashtabula County Day Care Center, said that for the first year the groups interacted in sing-a-longs and other special events, but the next year “we hope to schedule two to three days a week of combined classes. Mainstreaming is not happening if they are down at the other end of the hall.”

Superintendent Cozza believes the program is beneficial because it provides the resources of two certified teachers in the building. He said that Happy Hearts didn’t want to intrude on the Day Care Center the first year, but wanted to “let people know our staff is willing and able to work with them as they need us. It is good for our kids in that they mix with normally developing kids, but it is also good for the day care kids too.”

#### Speech Therapy, 1995

In 1995, the speech team at Happy Hearts consisted of Rhonda Marcinko, Joan Sisk, Leslie Skidmore, and Tracey Cory. Helping each student develop effective communication skills was their goal and they enjoyed discovering the strengths and abilities of their students as they learned and grew.

Rhonda Marcinko chose infants and young children as her specialty. She was part

of an evaluation team that assessed children under three to determine their eligibility for the Happy Hearts program. She also worked with the families of Happy Hearts students to help them learn about speech and language development and how to work with their children at home. She used a variety of therapy methods to address the unique needs of each of the children.

Joan Sisk focused especially on articulation, language development and lunch (not her own, but developing eating and feeding skills of the children). She challenged her students to verbalize with exciting and fun language activities. “Tell me with your words” was her trademark expression. She worked closely with teachers tracking student progress.

Leslie Skidmore liked devices ranging from adapted toys to computerized talking machines and other augmentative communication. She enjoyed searching for the perfect devices to expand children’s abilities to play, interact, control their environment, make choices, and communicate with others.

Tracey Cory assisted all three therapists in many areas. She helped with the mountains of paperwork, produced many of the daily therapy materials, and worked with the students and therapists. The speech department functioned as an effective team and the enthusiasm and capabilities of the four therapists and the classroom staff working for the students.

### **Happy Hearts Summer Program, August 22, 1988**

Benjamin Sullivan of Ashtabula successfully catches a water balloon during a water balloon toss.



Leslie Skidmore presents a show-and-tell card game to help teach students at the Happy Hearts Summer Program.

## **Summer Enrichment helps in development of children's skills**

### **August 22, 1988**

The Happy Hearts Summer Enrichment Program has come to a close but the effects of the activities are expected to help the children continue steady development during the upcoming school year.

The federally funded program is intended to supplement the normal educational plan carried out during the school year. A total of 103 students were involved in this year's program out of about 150 students enrolled during the normal school year, said program director Jennifer Urch.

According to Jennifer, education goals are developed for each child during the course of the school year. Then the summer program is used to maintain the skills developed or in some cases help the child reach more difficult goals.

"It helps maintain what they already have learned and helps others attain goals they have not yet achieved," she said.

The staff of the summer program includes nine teachers, nine teacher's assistants and one leisure time staff member and they strive for a more relaxed, fun, atmosphere in the summer program while offering activities that many of the kids might not otherwise get. Special activities of the summer program included roller skating, swimming, movies, and even a trip to the Erie Zoo.

#### **Blue Note**

**"It is good for our kids in that they mix with normally developing kids, but it is also good for the day care kids too."**

**Richard Cozza**

## Happy Hearts Camping



*Watching their friends dance the hula at Camp Rainbow, (left to right) Jenny Drew, Michelle Hicks, Cory Erdman, and Doug Dragon enjoy the dance and the food at Camp Rainbow. As part of Hawaiian Day at camp, the children wore leis and hula skirts and ate pineapple. Star Beacon photo by Pat Brink. July 18, 1982- Camp Rainbow*

A handmade flag flying overhead at Camp Rainbow is testimony to caring and closeness of day camp for disabled students for four weeks in summer.

“It develops into a family here,” Early Childhood Coordinator Russ Grippi said on one of the final days of the camp. “It builds and builds and builds until now there is a closeness here that is something very special.”

He said Camp Rainbow, which had a general theme of “Color Your World” for the four weeks provided many educational as well as colorful experiences for the nearly ninety campers participating.

“We call it a day camp, but it is actually very educationally sound. It takes the goals of the curriculum and transfers them from the classroom to the outdoors,” Grippi said. “In so doing, the kids are learning, but having a lot of fun” he added.

The camp staff was divided into seven groups and each group had its own counselor aide and volunteers. The volunteers who range in age from 14 to 72, are newcomers to the camp this year and according to Director Grippi, “they made it possible for the camp activities to be much more versatile.”

He said that because of the volunteers, campers were able to take some field trips and more could be done with the special days at camp.

## Happy Hearts Day Camp Offers Equestrian Classes July 6, 1983



*Relaxed and waiting her turn to demonstrate her new riding skills is Kim Drozd (on horse), one of twelve students taking equestrian classes during the Happy Hearts School summer camp, while Silvertawn Stables instructor Lisa Piagyi stands by. Ashtabula Star Beacon, July 6, 1983.*

Toni Wright of Silvertawn Stables, Jefferson and other riding instructors are giving horseback riding lessons to twelve of the campers at the Happy Hearts School.

A dozen of the more than 100 students attending the four-week day camp participate in the equestrian course, according to Russell Grippi, camp director. The riding class is one of several mini courses offered to campers.

To Camp Director Grippi's knowledge, no other school for the mentally handicapped and developmentally disabled in Ohio offers equestrian classes. He said that earlier educators did not attempt an equestrian program because they feared that handicapped children were not capable of riding and that the children would be afraid of large animals.

Toni Wright said the secret to the children's successful riding is that they stay relaxed and show no fear. Horse are sensitive animals and know their riders' feelings, she said.

The main goal is for the children to have fun, but everything is well structured and geared for learning experiences including horseback riding, Director Grippi said. Horseback riding holds several benefits such as improving balance and coordination and it allows the students to experience the things other students do. In order to take the class, the campers had to weigh their options and make a decision -something many of them had not done before, he said.

The camp is divided into four main groups, but campers had the option of missing

one of the main groups a couple days a week to participate in mini-courses such as photography, ceramics or horseback riding he said. The school hopes to continue with the equestrian classes during future camps.

## Happy Hearts Scouts



*Happy Hearts school teachers Mrs. Robert Louys and Mrs. Vincent Bishop receive gifts for the school from Mrs. Orville Wright and Mrs. Orrie Ellis and members Toni Dixon and Mary Jo Potter. Troop 5054 of Geneva presented a program for the children prior to the gift presentation.*

Happy Hearts Scouting, 1964

### Boy Scouts

Boy Scout Executive...Philip Karmer  
Institutional Representative...Stephen Woitovich  
Chairman..... Harry Summers

### Eagle Patrol

Larry Phelps.....Patrol Leader  
Richard Bowers.....Assistant Patrol Leader  
James Kessler.....Jerry Russell

### Indian Patrol

Arthur Brunner.....Patrol Leader  
Danny Custead.....Assistant Patrol Leader  
Larry Zetlaw.....Richard Campbell

### Girl Scouts

Mrs. Dorothy Bishop.....Institutional Representative.

District Advisor.....Mrs. Abby Talcott.  
Leader..... Mrs. Dorothy Covert  
Assistant Leader.....Mrs. Myron Hudson



Donna Zeller.....Rebecca DiNickle..... Rose Mauro  
June Ana Cichy..... Patricia Kapen..... Faith Spry..... Elizabeth Fogle..... Mary  
Daviss..... Mary Kehoe..... Diane Dickson.....Rena Hudson

### Cub Scouts

Institutional Representative Stephen Voitovich .....Chairman, Henry Roux  
Committeeman, Joseph Matrisciano..... Unit Leader, Harry Summers  
Den Mother, Mrs. Elva Roux.....Assistant Den Mother, Mrs. Dorothy Covert  
William Roux, Denner.....Kim Covert, Assistant Denner  
Timmy Summers..... Kenneth Arndt..... Claude Gaumer..... Joseph Matrisciano

### **Happy Hearts Scouting Groups Achievement Awards Program**

Introduction- G. Thomas Graf, Director Happy Hearts School  
Parade-Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts & Cub Scouts enter auditorium (audience stands)  
Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag-Audience and Scout Troops  
Summary of Boy Scouting – Phillip Kramer  
Candle Lighting Ceremony-Joseph Urban, Robert Bowers, Harry Summers & Boy  
Scouts  
Boy Scout Awards

Summary of Girl Scouting- Mrs. Abby Talcott Girl Scout Awards  
Summary of Cub Scouting- Harry Summers Cub Scout Awards  
Flag Bearers Retire the Flag  
Refreshments



*Happy Hearts Scouts Receive Awards  
Scouts receiving awards at Topky  
Memorial Chapel were Donna Zeller;  
Becky Di Nickle; Rose Mauro; Faith  
Spry; and Beth Fogle.*

Happy Hearts Girl Scout Troop 99  
celebrated its first anniversary with a  
dinner and court of awards Tuesday  
night at Topky Memorial Chapel. Each  
girl received three badges which she

earned during the past year. These include homemaker, good citizenship, and toymaker badges.

Recipients were Beth Fogle, Faith Spry; Carol Horn; Rose Mauro; Donna Zeller; Mary Keho; Mary Davis; June Cichy; Diana Dickson; Rena Hudson; Patty Kapen; and Becky DiNickle.

The Scouts also received one-year stars and troop crests. The crests are in the form of a wild rose. The girls are now working toward sign of the star. Mothers of Boy Scout Troop 24 and Cub Scout Den 1 helped in the kitchen. Den mother Mrs. Elva Roux was assisted by Mrs. Betty Brunell; Mrs. Inez Gaumer and Mrs. Irene Summers. Leader is Mrs. Harold Covert. Assistants are Mrs. George Spry and Mrs. Ronald Fogle. The girls were reported to be “very excited” about receiving their hard-earned badges.



### **Happy Hearts Receives a New Flag**

*Monday, June 8, 1970.*

*Presentation of a new nylon American flag was made to Happy Hearts School Friday morning by Ashtabula County American Legion Commander James McBride, Jefferson, on behalf of*

*the seven Legion posts in the county. Mrs. Vincent (Dorothy) Bishop, school supervisor, accepted the flag. Commander McBride is seen as he instructs on correct procedure in raising the flag. From left are Commander McBride; Mrs. Bishop; Kim Covert, Geneva Boy Scout; Tom McElroy, New Lyme, and Robert Hunter, North Kingsville, both Cub Scouts and Mrs. Lee (Helen) Cook, representing the Conneaut Mothers Club and American Legion Cowle Post 151.*



*1971. Happy Faces reflect the mood Tuesday night as Mrs. Francis Talcott (left) presents the roster for Troop 99 to Mrs. Harold Covert, leader of the new troop from Happy Hearts School. At right is Mrs. Myron Hudson, assistant leader.*

### **Happy Hearts Council Sees Boy and Girl Scout Rites**

A candlelight ceremony for Boy Scouts, Investiture service for Girl Scouts, and pinning of Cub Scouts preceded last night's Happy Hearts School Council meeting at Topky Memorial Chapel.

Thirteen Boy Scouts participated in the ceremony conducted by Scoutmaster Joseph Urban; Assistant Scoutmaster Robert Bowers; and chairman Harry Summers. The boys were addressed by district chairman Jack Ziegler and welcomed by Gust Zetlaw and Stephen Woitovich, institutional consultant.

Eleven Girl Scouts were invested by their leader, Mrs. Harold Covert, and assistant leader Mrs. Myron Hudson. Mrs. Francis Talcott, District adviser of the Massasauga Council addressed the girls. They were greeted by Mrs. George Spry and Mrs. Vincent Bishop, institutional consultant.

Eight Cub Scouts were pinned by their den mother, Mrs. Eva Raux, and her assistant, Mrs. Covert. They were greeted by Mr. Sommers, unit leader, Joseph Matrisciano, Henry Raux, and Mr. Woitovich.

A charter was presented to Mr. Urban and a troop roster to Mrs. Covert. Thomas Graf, director of Happy Hearts School, welcomed the Scouts. Refreshment were served by the Happy Hearts Council. The regular meeting followed with Mrs. Myron Hudson presiding.



*February 6, 1971. Plans for Happy Hearts School Scouts to note the 61st anniversary of Boy Scouts of American are made by Ron Siebeneck, Grand Knight of Knights of Columbus Council 4212, the Rev, George M. Waggett OMI, pastor of St. Joseph Church, Jefferson, and Joseph Urban, scoutmaster for Happy Hearts School.*

### Happy Hearts Scouts to Note 61st Anniversary

Happy Hearts School scouts will celebrate the 61st anniversary of Boy Scouts of America with a Happy Hearts Scout oriented celebration of Mass at St. Joseph's Church Jefferson, tonight at 7.

Happy Hearts School Scouts will attend Mass in uniform and will serve as ushers and assist in collecting the offering. They will take the gifts for the Mass to the altar and the Catholic Scouts will receive Communion Mass.

After Mass, the Knights of Columbus will provide refreshments for the Scouts and their families. Lastly, the scouts will recite in unison the Scout Oath and Law and have blessing of the Happy Hearts Scout flag. Sunday at 10:45 a.m. the scouts have been invited to attend services at First Presbyterian Church in Ashtabula where six of the scouts are enrolled in a Retarded Children's Sunday School Class.

### **Two Hundred Scouts at Camp Thursday July 8, 1971**

Scouts of Northeast Ohio Council, Boy Scouts of America, are once again taking advantage of the opportunities for fun and adventure offered by Camp Stigwandish.

Nearly two hundred scouts and scouters from the tri-county area are participating in the third week of camping. As a result of four years planning by Ashtabula Happy Hearts Troop 24 and local scout officials, the troop has nine boys at camp.

Joe Urban is scoutmaster. The boys are taking part in all camp activities along with the other scouts. The camp staff expressed delight at the interest proficiency in skills of the Happy Hearts troop, according to Don Lucha, scout executive.

Wednesday was observed as open house at the camp. Persons who have contributed their funds and labors were invited to visit the site to view the improvements. The improvements include a newly constructed Webelos area, boat and canoe storage building, improved handicraft area and the new chapel area which is still under construction. Scout officials noted that next Wednesday the camp will be inspected by a team of regional experts. For the past five years the camp has received an A Plus 100 rating, which is the top rating.

### **Anniversary of Scouting Noted at ACCRC Meeting February 28, 1973**

In observance of the 63 Anniversary month of Boy Scouts of America, Happy Hearts School Troop 24 conducted the opening flag ceremony when the Ashtabula County Council for Retarded Children met Tuesday at Happy Hearts School.

Devotions were led by the group with each scout taking part. The Scouts were also in charge of the program following the business agenda. Films of past activities and displays were shown. Joseph Urban is Scoutmaster. Dixon Greenwood from the District Scout movement was welcomed as a guest.

Special refreshments in the scouting theme were provided by Mrs. Harry Church and Mrs. Joseph Nappi.

Mrs. Joseph Hunter, president, announced three appointments to the Council Board of Directors. Serving two-year terms will be Mrs. Nadine Moroski and Donald Zeller. Mr. Urban was appointed for an unexpired term of one year.

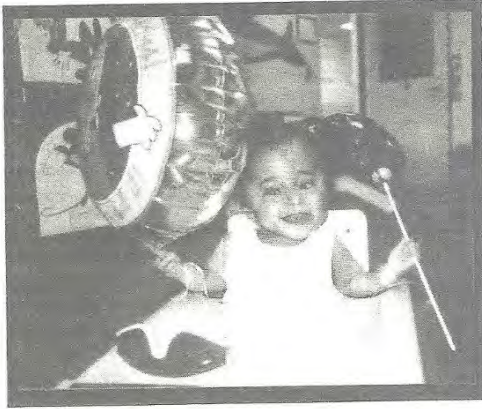
Chairmen of the committees for the year were also announced. They are as follows: Mrs. Stanley Giddings and Mrs. James Theiss, ways and means; Mrs. Moroski, membership; Mrs. Hunter and Mrs. Charles Thomas, publicity; Mrs. Church, program; Frank Barrett, residential care; Mr. and Mrs. Richard Hinkle, legal and governmental affairs; Mrs. Vincent Bishop and Miss Betty Hartley, education. Mrs. William Licate headed the research committee; Mrs. Stanley Gaumer, religious education and youth group; Mrs. Nappi, social; and Mrs. Helen Millspaugh, sunshine. Heading the boy, girl, and cub scout committees will be Mr. Urban; Mrs. Harold Covert; and Mrs. Henry Roux, respectively.

Plans for fund-raising projects for the year were revealed by Mrs. Theiss.

Currently, support will be given to the statewide project of the Ohio Association for Retarded Children.

## Special Story: Potential in Pictures New Directions 2000

by Will Peadon, Case Manager  
Early Intervention



Over the past couple of months, a little girl, 5 years old has been grabbing the headlines in our local newspaper. Ashtabula County has been watching and reading about her recent journey to New York City with her Mom and Dad, to appear on the Maury Povich Show. On the show, she was recognized for her amazing courage and spirit in facing unbelievable adversity. Her name is Tiffany Manning and her proud parents are Samantha and Walter. Tiffany's story is wonderfully uplifting and her smile beaming from the front page of the Star Beacon has given us all good reason to smile with her!

What many do not know is that Tiffany received Early Intervention services through the Ashtabula County Board of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities for the first three years of her life. As you may be aware from the news, Tiffany was born with thirty bone fractures and a number of other serious medical problems. Her fragile bones were broken in the birth process because Tiffany was born with Osteogenesis Imperfect – “the brittle bone” disease. Her doctors were unaware of this condition prior to delivery.

Tiffany's numerous medical problems kept her in the hospital for the first three months of her life. The doctors did not expect her to survive and instructed Samantha and Walter to take her home and give her lots of love. Tiffany arrived home with a referral to Hospice. But Tiffany and her parents were not about to give up. After a few very difficult weeks of waiting, watching, and expecting the worst, Tiffany's parents called our program and asked for help.

When I first met with the family at their home, Samantha brought Tiffany into the living room on a big, overstuffed pillow. She was flat on her back and could not be placed in an inclined position for fear of breaking her spine. Tiffany's parents did everything they could to ensure her safety, but they did not know how to help her begin to learn how to do the things a baby her age should be doing. Samantha remembers that she felt "overwhelmed and lost in the beginning." She said, "I kind of took the doctor's side, initially, and thought there wasn't much we could do."

Developing appropriate interventions for Tiffany required a great deal of teamwork, creativity, brainstorming, trust and searching. The Early Intervention team (mom, dad, PT, OT,SLT, social worker, and EI Specialist) all worked together to ensure that Tiffany could overcome the obstacles to reach developmental milestones. Samantha said, "There were lots of hugs and tears" at each momentous achievement.

Bonnie Bashaw, E.I. specialist, remembers when Tiffany was six months old, she no longer wanted to stay on her back. To aid her movement and protect her spine, a sling was created to hold Tiffany on a wedge to be more upright. The team found rattles light and small enough for Tiffany to safely hold and for the first time in her life, she began to learn to play. Bonnie stated, "We attached a helium balloon to her wrist or ankle so she could learn cause and effect while exercising her muscles at the same time."

Physical therapist Sally Flash recalls the innovative adaptations that were made to allow Tiffany the opportunity to lay on her tummy, roll, and sit. Sally remembers Tiffany's courage, even though she faced recurring bone fractures and excruciating pain. Tiffany "worked through her motion and strengthening sessions with enthusiasm."

By the fall of 1996, Tiffany could sit by herself, do push-ups from her knees, and keep herself on her hands and knees with little assistance. She was able to ride the school bus and drive her motorized Cooper Car around her own neighborhood. Today she is standing with a support for balance and, best of all, Tiffany is attending kindergarten classes! Although Tiffany's story is extraordinary, hers is not unlike the stories of many "E.I." kids and their families. It is the story of persistence and hope. Samantha says she remembers the good (Tiffany's accomplishments) and puts the painful past in the back of her mind. She says that she gained a lot of support, direction, and encouragement through the Early Intervention Services. But most importantly, she feels that "Tiffany's limitations were not actual limitations. We tapped into the potential that was always there!"

## Chapter Eighteen: Yellow Buses Trek Through Ashtabula County



*The Happy Hearts School bus, a colorful prop designed by director Mike DeMarino(left) will be used in the annual spring program at Happy Hearts on May 19th. About 190 students will present musical numbers. Pictured here from left are Nino..., Bonnie Stevenson and Todd Sloan. Theme of the show is "A Little Bit Country, Little Bit Town."*







## **Happy Hearts School Bus Drivers Honored**

A steering wheel, symbolic of her 13 years as a Happy Hearts School bus driver, is presented to Mrs. Edgar Good (left) by Mrs. Paul Berg, mistress of ceremonies, also a Happy Hearts bus driver. Mrs. Good was honored at a retirement party. 1968.

Mrs. Edgar Good of Kingsville, retiring Happy Hearts School bus driver, was honored at a retirement party recently at Hotel Ashtabula by the school staff and other bus drivers. Mrs. Good received gifts from the school staff, Ash/Craft Board, and

clients, Ashtabula County Board of Mental Retardation, and the Council for Retarded Children. She also received a flower-decorated steering wheel, symbolizing her 13 years as a Happy Hearts school bus driver.

Happy Hearts school began operating in 1955, and Mrs. Good was the first from the Happy Hearts staff to retire. She was one of the school's first drivers and drove her own car to transport children before the school acquired its own buses.



### *Mrs. Agnes F. Berg*

*Mrs. Agnes F. Berg behind the wheel of Happy Hearts bus No. 8, retired recently after transporting mentally handicapped students for 25 years to and from classes in Ashtabula County. Ashtabula Star Beacon Sunday Paper Photo.1977*

Happy Hearts school may have just lost a school bus driver because of retirement, but has gained fond memories which will endure for as long as there are people who care for the mentally handicapped in Ashtabula County. Mrs. Agnes Berg of New Lyme, retired July 15, following 25 years transporting mentally

handicapped students to and from various locations throughout the Ashtabula City area before and after Happy Hearts School opened in 1968. She drove them to classes by car until she started driving bus 25 years ago.

“Many people think that mentally handicapped children are more difficult to deal with than other children, but the more you know them, the more normal than abnormal they become,” said Mrs. Berg.

She became active in working with mentally handicapped children in 1954, because her daughter Paula was rejected in kindergarten. She added, “I saw an advertisement in the Star Beacon about classes for the retarded in Geneva in 1954. I then met with six other families to hold classes. Soon after, the Ashtabula County Council for Retarded Children evolved from the program which Mrs. Berg helped establish. The council then set fund raising activities to continue classes. She said a class of seven children began in 1955 at the First United Methodist Church on Elm Avenue.

“We held classes in three or four locations and the state legislature voted operating money for classes until it was taken over by the Ashtabula County Welfare Department in 1959. The name Happy Hearts was chosen in August 1957,” said Mrs. Berg.

“We received much help and equipment from Ashtabula County service clubs including the Kiwanis and even had our own money-making projects. In addition, the parents paid weekly tuition and transportation costs,” said Mrs. Berg.

“It’s been very satisfying and gratifying to see the growth of services in Ashtabula County and to know you’ve had a small part in it,” said Mrs. Berg. She said she drove a bus because she could take her mentally handicapped child Paula home with her and be with her constantly each day when Paula was growing up several years ago.

“I also chose to drive a bus because it is an excellent job for a woman. I like the daily contact with the kids.” added Mrs. Berg. She said the school started out with only three or four buses. “Now Happy Hearts School has more than 11 buses for 11 routes,” said Mrs. Berg. She has always driven buses on routes centered in the city of Ashtabula.

In an Ashtabula Star Beacon Sunday Paper story by Sara Smith dated April 4, 1976, Agnes said she sort of “grew into” her job as a Happy Hearts school bus driver. Her daughter was a student when the school first opened so she volunteered

to drive other students to school and her car along with three other mothers. She helped in the fund raising for the new school in 1954, and a few years later when the school bought buses to transport the students, she became one of the first drivers.

“There’s no discipline problem,” she said. “It’s not nearly as bad as the public schools.” She said that some students might be afraid or hyperactive and hard to handle. Sometimes it gets noisy when any of the children are crying. “I notice on rainy days they’re more restless. They are also excited after a party or when something has happened at school,” she said.

Mrs. Berg says that one problem she has is that some of the children cannot talk and she cannot tell when something is wrong. Sometimes, she said, you can tell by the mannerisms or one of the other children will tell you. The older children are the biggest factor in helping. They will sit with unruly children and help with them.



*Happy Hearts School buses are equipped with a lift to help students in wheelchairs get into the bus. Craig Gustafson, a volunteer student from Edgewood Senior High School helps Michael Meredyck board the bus to go home. Ashtabula Star Beacon Sunday Paper Photograph.*

*All dressed and ready to go home after a long day at school, Danny Payne boards a Happy Hearts bus. An Ashtabula Star Beacon Sunday Paper photograph.*

Mrs. Berg said that she has noticed that mothers are very apprehensive of putting their children on the bus for the first time. The child may be crying when he is put on the bus, but two blocks later is so absorbed with his new surroundings that he has forgotten to cry.

Happy Hearts drivers must teach the children how to get off the bus. Although the students are always let off the bus on the same side of the street as their homes, Mrs. Berg said there is always a problem with cars passing the bus, which is against the law. She recalled one woman who passed her on Columbus Avenue. She realized she should have stopped, so she backed up after she got past.



Mrs. Berg drives the “city” route with her round-trip mileage being about seventy miles. “It is the same route every day, but it’s different every day. The kids themselves are different and interesting.”

“As far as a job, it is a very good job for women. You are home during the day and can do the shopping or start supper,” she said.

Mrs. Berg will retire in June to join her husband as house parents for the new residential home for retarded boys in North Kingsville. She vividly recalls her experiences and last day with the children on the bus at Happy Hearts school before her July 15th retirement. “I never turned on the radio every morning, but the kids knew latest news, songs, and movies. Being with them is an education in itself. Anyone who works in education can tell you,” said Mrs. Berg.

The last day at work the kids on the bus started crying one by one when they found out I was leaving. They stopped though when we pulled into a Dairy Queen. Some people say that working with the mentally handicapped is depressing, but it is very rewarding work,” she added.

She plans to travel to Florida in October with her husband Paul to live. Her husband retired in 1975 as a sheet metal fabricator at the Carlson Street Fabricating Company. As part of her retirement memorabilia from the students and staff at Happy Hearts School, Mrs. Berg received a plaque, watch and furniture for her new home in Jensen Beach, Florida.

She died October 1, 2012, in Stuart, Florida.

### **Happy Hearts and Ash/Craft Bus Drivers Honored for Years of Safe Driving October 1987**

At the Annual Bus Driver Safety Meeting in October the Ashtabula County Schools presented awards to drivers in each of the County’s school districts. Several Happy Hearts and Ash/Craft drivers were recognized for their consecutive years of safe driving.

Jan Winchester – 17 years; Mary Lou Moody-13 years; Beulah Plats-10 years;  
Rowynn Bancroft-9 years; Sheila Knowlton-6 years; Dinah Pal-5 years;  
Sharon Yoak- 5 years; Sandy Cusano- 5 years; Terri Gill – 4 years;

Cindy Jackson – 4 years; Mary Elligson – 4 years; Cindy Shearer – 3 years; Arlane Bancroft – 3 years ; Jeanette Banko – 2 years; Debbie Gill – 1 year; Patti Davis – 1 year; Cheryl Lutes – 1 year.

**Charlie Yaharaus, Bus Mechanic  
New Directions. Winter 1988 by Holly Brown**

Since Charlie was reluctant to be interviewed, we have put together the comments of those who know him.

As Rick Cozza tells it, when he first came to Ashtabula, the first person to make a strong impression on him was Charles Yaharaus. Rick says he was amazed at the personal interest Charlie seemed to take in his work and remarked that Charlie seemed to feel those were his buses out on the road.

Well, in a way they are! Charlie has been THE mechanic here for over ten years, and to say that he takes pride in his work is an understatement. To say that he has done a fine job is an understatement, too! Linda Porcello, Transportation Coordinator, says that Charlie's heart and soul are in each and every one of buses. His buses. "He is dedicated and reliable and, when the chips are down, you can always count on Charlie."

For years, Charlie kept the bus fleet on the road without any help. When a second mechanic was finally hired, Charlie worked even harder. He had always managed to keep outside repairs and costs to a minimum. Now that he has help, he has been able to do almost everything here. And he worries! He worries about the buses, he worries about the drivers, about the transportation budget and about the Transportation Coordinators – four of whom he has "trained." He shows concern, offers advice and is constantly looking for areas in need of preventative action.

One of the drivers, Rowynn Bancroft, says that Charlie is affectionately known as the father of the transportation department. She says, "We are not just drivers and passengers to him, but family. When we take a bus on the road we know it is as safe as it can be." And like family it is. Sometimes Charlie is rather crusty, sometimes he gets frustrated and lets us know it but always, always, Charlie is dependable and caring. He has been the advisor and patient listener to many – especially the superintendents over the years. While getting Charlies respect takes some time, if you gain it you feel a strong sense of accomplishment.

Although he is basically a very reserved and private person, Charlie has a

marvelous sense of humor and a lovely twinkle in his eye. As driver Dinah Pal told us, “Charlie always says that if you’re going to break down, make sure it’s by McDonalds.”

Bus aide Sandi Kanicki says that whenever she thinks of Charlie she remembers the yearly trips to pick out and deliver the Christmas trees for the school. It was always cold, things did not always go smoothly, but Charlie always made it fun. Lately, Charlie’s been hinting about retirement. Only hinting, mind you. Retirement is something we don’t even think about because we can’t begin to imagine life without Charlie!

### **Hands Up for Happy Hearts Bus Safety**



*Happy Hearts bus driver Cis Plats (left) and bus aide Verna Osburn assist Charlie Smith into one of the Happy Hearts buses designed to accommodate wheelchairs. September 24, 1989.*

Ashtabula County observed School Bus Safety Week from September 17 to September 23, 1989, with state mandated school bus rider safety sessions.

At Happy Hearts School and Ash/Craft Industries, the Bus Safety Program took on a new look this year, according to Linda Porcello, transportation coordinator. Linda said bus safety taught by the teachers in past years, was taken over this year by a volunteer committee of transportation

workers. The Committee consisted of bus drivers Cis Plats and Cheryl Lutes; bus aides Rick Walker, Sandi Kinicki, and Carolyn Porter; parent volunteer Jean Fields; and Linda Porcello.

In January, Linda began developing the Happy Hearts Bus Safety Program by asking department personnel for the five most important passenger safety principles. The resulting top five were incorporated into a slogan which was used in a combination of sign language, rhymes, and finger plays. The following principles were taught throughout the week under the common theme of “Hands

Up for Bus Safety.”

Be quiet at railroad crossings.  
Sit down when the bus is moving.  
Look three ways before crossing the street.  
Keep the aisle clear to the emergency door.  
Good behavior is best.

Using a skit outlined by Sandi Kinicki, the transportation staff made a video to demonstrate the safety principles. Bulletin board displays, a rhyme and daily “Calendar of Colors” helped to reinforce the rules.

Linda Porcello said there are a number of rider safety issues peculiar to transporting handicapped children. Students may suffer from seizures or various medical conditions. They may be blind or deaf. Some students require special seats or are in wheelchairs.

Cis Plats, a driver for the school, says she has students on her bus ranging from infancy to more than 60 years old.

On-going in-service programs are provided for dealing with these special needs on the bus, according to Linda Porcello. Additionally, all bus drivers for Happy Hearts and Ash/Craft Industries must complete a multi-media first aid course.



**Mary Lou Moody, Bus Driving Diplomat**

Photo by Margie Netzel, Ashtabula Star Beacon

August 6, 1990

Often, the first and sometimes only contact Ashtabula county citizens have with Happy Hearts School and Ash/Craft Industries are the big yellow buses that travel to every corner of Ashtabula County on their daily routes. This fact of transportation life makes transportation staff the first line diplomats for the school and workshop. Mary Lou Moody is one of

the best bus driving diplomats.

Both children and adults spend a great deal of time on Happy Hearts buses and the

trip to and from school and the workshop is an extension of their day. Bus drivers and their aides can reinforce the program goals with their interactions with passengers. Since personal diplomacy is so important, the transportation staff has to be efficient in their jobs and highly skilled in dealing with their passengers. Mary Lou Moody treats each trip like a diplomatic mission.

Going out of her way to make the bus trip pleasant for all of her passengers, Mary Lou gives each one cheery and personal greetings and goodbyes, relating to them with the caring and professionalism of a seasoned diplomat. Always pleasant and ready with a kind word and smile, Mary Lou says that she likes driving and credits her passengers with making her job worthwhile in many ways. "I love being around the students and clients. They truly appreciate me and make me feel important. They are a joy to be around. I wish more people could see our program and experience some of the good things we do every day," she says.

Mary Lou shows diplomatic restraint about the extra things she does daily for her passengers. Despite her tactfulness in not mentioning her act of kindness, word circulated that she had bought a Halloween costume for a four-year-old boy because his parents couldn't afford one. That's just one of her many acts of kindness.

November 1990 will mark Mary Lou's 17th anniversary as a bus driver for Happy Hearts and Ash/Craft. She became a substitute driver and substitute classroom aide in November 1973, and a full-time driver in September 1974. Over the years Mary Lou has driven bus routes in Geneva, Ashtabula, and Conneaut, in many different kinds of buses and in all kinds of weather. She has worked under five Transportation Coordinators and four Superintendents.

Mary Lou resides in Ashtabula with her husband, David and son, Mark 18, and Shon, 15. Daughter Donna, 21, and sons Dan, 25, and Brian, 21, are out on their own. Mary Lou enjoys camping and cooking.

Twenty-two years later, a story by Margie Netzel in the Ashtabula Star Beacon announced Mary Lou Moody's retirement as a bus driver and diplomat after 25 years as a bus driver for the Ashtabula County Board of Developmental Disabilities and 13 years as Director of Transportation. She retired with mixed feelings and a sense of excitement for the future.

She said, "It has been so rewarding working with my students, consumers and parents and co-workers," she said. "Everyone plays a great part in the lives of the



people we serve. Our students and consumers show you what compassion is all about.” Making good on a promise to a passenger, Mary Lou delayed her retirement for one day. She had told the passenger that she would ride the bus with them on her last day, but the day turned out to be so busy that she didn’t have time. She came in the next day and rode the bus, keeping her promise.

Mary Lou credited co-workers like Ashtabula County Board of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities Superintendent Anne Zeitler and Lynda Perry, Lori Burdick, Heather Perdue, Cheryl Marshall, Pam Rose, and Mike DeMarino, with supporting her successful career. “I was very proud to be a member of the Board’s leadership team and to be a part of our strong planning process,” she said.

According to Mary Lou, her time with Happy Hearts and Ash/Craft made her a better person and the students and workers have been like a part of her family for many years. “We truly live our motto: “Imagine, Believe, Achieve.” She said she enjoyed her job so much it never felt like work.

Mother of five and grandmother of seven, Mary Lou planned to enjoy her family, volunteer locally, and travel with her husband, David. “We are going to go just everywhere,” she said.

### **Linda Porcello Transportation Chief for the Ashtabula County MR/DD MR/DDT Praised for Her Work**



*Linda Porcello poses here with some of her charges in the bus fleet. She also services as a mentor for an Edgewood High School student.*

*Ashtabula Star Beacon photo by Dana Lewis.*

Linda Porcello thinks Charlie Coffelt is quite a young man, but that’s ok because he thinks she’s pretty special too. No, this isn’t a story of young love- it’s about a special friendship between a forty something young woman and the world in general. Charlie in particular. In her official position Linda is

Transportation Coordinator for the Ashtabula County MR/DD Board. For ten years she’s been in charge of keeping a fleet of buses on the road and about 350 students

and clients of Happy Hearts and Ash/Craft Industries safely at their posts on a daily basis. Unofficially, she's a mentor to Charlie who she comes into contact with on a regular basis.

A seventeen-year-old Edgewood Senior High School sophomore, Charlie Coffelt wrote a letter to the newspaper praising Linda for her many kindnesses to himself and others. "I'm only seventeen years old and she encouraged me to go for the gold after high school," he wrote. "She never even forgets a Christmas card. The list could go on and on."

Porcello admits she keeps Hallmark in business by sending nearly six hundred cards of various types to various individuals throughout the year. Most, she said, are Christmas cards. Sitting at a cluttered desk in a postage stamp office which overlooks the "scenic" bus garage, Porcello gives a glimpse of why she's so well liked – a good attitude. "I've never been happier in my work. I really enjoy my job. I consider myself blessed: she said.

Looking closer at the clutter the desk is filled not only with schedules and messages, but also with little plaques bearing encouraging or inspirational sayings. The walls are filled with comic strips cut out because they fit the mood of the moment; poems, photos and cards complete the happy homey décor. Besides working long hours at her main job, Porcello is also a volunteer in many organizations.



### **Governor's Committee Recognizes Residents for Work in Traffic Safety**

*Richard Cozza, Jr. of Ashtabula, Superintendent of the MR/DD Board overseeing Happy Hearts School and Ash/Craft (right) received an award from the Governor's Traffic Safety Committee on November 28 for his involvement in securing railroad crossing gages and warning lights at the Green Road crossing in Kingsville Township. Presenting the*

*award is Charles Shipley, highway safety director.*

Two area residents were recognized by the 1991 Governor's Traffic Safety Committee on November 28 in Columbus. Awards bestowed on twenty of the top

traffic activists in Ohio, recognize those who work in their communities to improve traffic safety through increased public awareness, law enforcement, or road engineering. Richard J. Cozza Jr. of Ashtabula and Corporal Led Wisniewski of the Andover Police Department were presented awards.

Corporal Wisniewski, a volunteer auxiliary member since 1980, initiated Safety Town in Andover and assisted with the startup of the program in surrounding communities. He regularly volunteers his time to work with school children, retired citizens, and the disabled in traffic safety education. In addition to this award, Corporal Wisniewski was recognized as the 1990 Andover Police Officer of the Year and the 1990 Ashtabula County Crime Clinic Officer of the Year.

Richard Cozza, Jr. was recognized for his involvement to secure railroad crossing gages and warning lights at the Green Road crossing in Kingsville Township. The crossing was the site of five accidents, including one fatality, in a ten-year period. Richard Cozza's two and a half years of steady perseverance attracted the support of community, state, and local officials.

### Hands Up for Bus Safety



*Ash/Craft employee Rena Hudson sews a tote bag with the "Hands Up For Bus Safety" logo on it while Happy Hearts advanced class students Walter Kightlinger of Conneaut and Mary Shannon of Geneva hold the finished products. Nancy Erikson of the Ashtabula Star Beacon took the photo. October 16, 1990*

Linda Porcello, transportation coordinator for the Ashtabula County Board of Mental

Retardation and Developmental Disabilities produced a video called Hands Up for Bus Safety for School Bus Safety Week. She said this is the second year the district has selected the five-minute video based on a poem that Cheryl Lutes, a bus driver, and last year's safety week chairwoman, wrote as a training tool for Happy Hearts students and Ash/Craft clients.

Five bus safety points that a poll of district drivers and bus aides chose as the most important are emphasized during the video, according to coordinator Porcello. The

points are:

Be quiet at railroad crossings.

Sit down when the bus is moving.

Look three ways when crossing the street to get on the bus.

Keep the aisle clear to the emergency door.

Be polite.

The poem was adapted to video last year using transportation department employees, but according to Linda Porcello the current video features students from Happy Hearts and Ash/Craft who were chosen for knowing and following bus safety rules. One student and one client from each bus were selected to be in the video.

Teachers and workshop supervisors will use the video in their classrooms during School Bus Safety Week. During School Bus Safety Week, teachers will reinforce each of the safety points in the video by associating the rule with a color. Students are asked to wear clothing of that color on a given day, such as “sit down brown” on Tuesday. “The response to the colored clothing last year was overwhelming,” Linda said.

### **Ride -A- Bus-Week**

In the last week of May 27, 1993, the Ashtabula County Board of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities sponsored a Ride -A-Bus Week for Happy Hearts School and Ashcraft Industries. Bus driver Terri Harchalk of Ashtabula and bus assistant Betty Morrison of Monroe Township were enthusiastic about the event.

Betty Morrison who has been a bus assistant for several years said, “A lot of people learn so much from this week.”

Bus assistant Morrison and bus driver Terri Harchalk think of their bus as a mobile day care center. They greet every student and Ash/Craft worker they transport and they get to know them and their stories. One little girl on their route who had been very dependent on her brothers and sisters now gets on and off the bus by herself because of the efforts of the bus driver and her assistant. Terri Harchalk and Betty Morrison witnessed a symbolic graduation the day when her sister greeted her at the bus and the little girl refused to hold hands, walked up the porch by herself and proudly turned around and waved.

## **The Wheels on the Bus Roll Through Ride-A-Bus Week**

May 15, 2005

The wheels on the bus roll round and through, Ashtabula through and through,  
Ashtabula through and through,  
The wheels on the bus roll round and through,  
Ashtabula County to Happy Hearts School.

The wheels on the bus roll Ash/Craft way, Ash/Craft way, Ash/Craft way,  
The wheels on the bus roll Ash/Craft way, So the workers can earn their pay!

The Transportation Department of the Ashtabula County Board of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities is celebrating its annual Ride-A-Bus Week. Happy Hearts School is sending invitations to parents, guardians, and staff members asking if they want to take a bus ride like the students and workers do every day. The Ride-A-Bus Week event will take place from May 16 through May 20th.

This is a special year marking the 50th Anniversary of Happy Hearts School. The idea of ride-a-bus week was first introduced in 1988 to promote public awareness within the Transportation Department. Held once a year in May, it takes a group effort to coordinate and has been highly successful since it began.

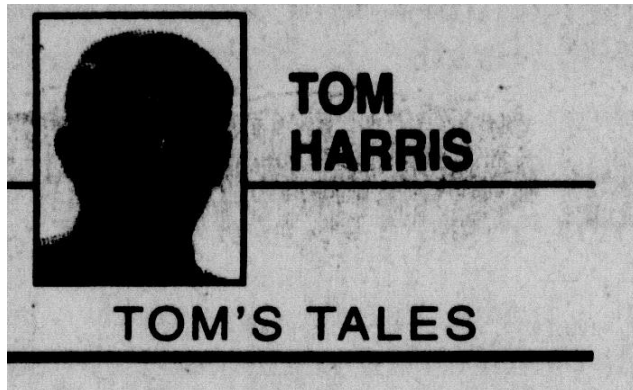
The buses travel 1,500 miles a day, and the driver must daily meet the challenge of staying within the state allotted time requirements with passengers on board. Each bus has a bus assistant on board to attend to the special needs of the passengers. Transportation Supervisor Mary Lou Moody is looking forward to people joining in for Ride-A-Bus Week.

### **Blue Note**

Mary Lou Moody said of her years with Happy Hearts and Ash/Craft that they “made her a better person and the students and workers have been like a part of her family for many years. We truly live our motto: Imagine, Believe, Achieve.”

## Special Story

### Getting to Work, Back Home an Odyssey for Ash/Craft Bus Riders



May 29, 2008

Every afternoon at 2:30 the multipurpose room at Ash/Craft Industries becomes a bus terminal. Most of the Ash/Craft workers wait in their work groups, but those who require assistance boarding the buses gather in the multipurpose room, some in wheelchairs, others with walkers. Things begin to stir when the buses pull up next to the building. A staff member looks around, spots the client she's looking for, says "Come on Joe," and helps guide his motorized wheelchair out the door and on the bus lift. Another staff person looks around and can't find the person she's looking for. "Where's Mary Anne?" she says.

"She went home early," someone replies. "I knew that," she says, as she helps the next person on her list to the bus.

It takes a fair amount of organization to pull it all off. In many cases it's not enough to just get the client to the right bus. On the buses that transport two or more clients in wheelchairs, the anxious commuters must be lifted on the bus in the proper order. That way the clients can be situated so as to minimize the disruption when the time comes for a client in a wheelchair to disembark.

On May 19, I waited for the clients in the multi-purpose room. I was taking advantage of the Ashtabula County Board of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities annual Ride-a- Bus Week. It's been ten years or more since I've been on an ACBMR/DD bus, and the few trips I made when employed by the Board were work related. This time, I was just going along for the ride. I

boarded with the early loaders because I needed a little assistance. Rather than laugh while watching me struggle with the step, the crew of Bus 26 – driver Terri Harchalk and bus aide Jill Scott—took me and my walker up on the lift. It was fun, something I had never done before, and the day was pleasant. But those few minutes on the lift must seem like an eternity to the wheelchair-bound on a windy winter morning or during a downpour in July.

“The clients and Happy Hearts students can get pretty cold and pretty wet,” Terri Harchalk said.

The afternoon boarding procedure begins at Happy Hearts, and several students were in their seats when I got on at Ash/Craft. When I sat down, the young fellow in front of me looked out from around his seat and flashed the most engaging smile imaginable. Then he sat up straight, and a moment later he held his right hand out into the aisle. When I gave him five, he turned around, smiled, and waited for me to extend my palm so he could slap it. While he didn’t speak, he soon made it clear that he wanted my pad and pen. I gave them to him, and he wrote his name and age. He asked for the pad several more times before he got home, and he jotted down a couple numbers roughly the size of the national debt. I asked him if it was his phone number. He shook his head. So, I asked if it might be his address. He nodded, smiled a big smile, and motioned for me to return the tablet to him.

The atmosphere on the bus is pretty much what you’d expect. Some of the passengers slept, and others chatted, telling the story of their day and their plans for the evening. Will and Ben, two Ash/Craft clients who spent the afternoon working at the Ashtabula YMCA, talked about their jobs. They perform various housekeeping chores at the Y as part of Ash/Craft’s community employment program. Sue, another Ash/Craft client, was in a more jocular mood. “You look like my old man ,Tom,” she said. “You’ve got gray hair.”

It was pretty much a straight shot until we crossed the Norfolk Southern tracks at Park Avenue. That’s when the business of delivering the students and clients to their doorsteps began. “We’re going to get you dizzy now,” Terri Harchalk said. You can see the maze of streets that make up Ashtabula on any map, but to truly appreciate the labyrinth, riding through the city on a school bus is recommended. I went from being somewhat lost to completely lost to knowing where I was to being somewhat lost again, etc, etc. There weren’t many intersections at which we didn’t turn, and if there was a railroad crossing in the vicinity, we crossed it. And this was a pleasant afternoon in May. “These streets get pretty narrow in the winter,” Terri said.

There are other obstacles, too. We were headed east on Route 20, and Terri got into the inside lane to turn. But at the end of the street she intended to turn onto was a sign, "Road Closed." "What are you going to do?" Jill Scott asked. "I guess we're going to go down it. We don't have much choice," Terri Harchalk said. She didn't have an option. A Happy Hearts student lived a block or two down the closed road. Normally, after dropping the student at his house, Terri would have continued in the direction we had been heading. Today, however, she elected to turn around rather than challenge the paving crew which could be seen working in the distance. She found a long driveway, backed the bus into it, with less trouble than I have backing my little Aveo, and got us pointed toward West Prospect.

As we drove by Family Video, Jill Scott struck up a conversation with a young man, who looked to be about 11 or 12. She asked him if he was going to get any movies, and he told her a great deal about wrestling, about Shawn Michaels and Mr. Vince McMahon. Then the boy got started on his brother. "He ticks me off," he said.

There was more to do after the last passenger got off. Jim and Brian work on the afternoon cleaning crew at Ash/Craft, and Bus 26 is their ride to work. So, the odyssey through the city streets continued for 10 more minutes before Terri Harchalk could turn east and traverse a relatively straight stretch of road. The sixteen bus routes operated by the ACBMR/DD go just about everywhere in Ashtabula County. Every time Harchalk turned down another city street, a colleague somewhere was turning on to a dusty road in a part of the county where silos dot the skyline. The fleet travels about 1,500 miles a week, with the first bus scheduled to leave each morning at 6. In the afternoon, the last bus is due back at the garage at 5. "We have a very experienced staff," director of transportation Mary Lou Moody said. "Our sixteen drivers and sixteen aides have been with the program an average of 15 years. It is a great group of people, and they all do everything necessary and then some to get the job done right."

Prodded by her sister Debbie Gill, Terri Harchalk began driving bus for the ACBM/DD in 1982 as a substitute and the next year she was hired as a regular driver. Twenty-five years later, Terri and Debbie are still driving. "I can't imagine doing anything else," Terri Harchalk said. "I enjoy it so much. Years ago, my kids Josh and Jessica, would come with me on the route, and they still talk about it."

Jill Scott has been working for the ACBM/DD since 2000. "To me, this is really rewarding," she said. "The best part is when someone gets on in a bad mood and I can put them into a good mood."



# Chapter 19: Memories

## Memories



Kayla Pepp 2-23-2018

I loved the training in the Happy Hearts kitchen. I helped rinse the dishes and I took everyone's tray when they were done eating. It was a very fun and enjoyable experience.

The fun part was working with the wonderful and helpful staff in the kitchen. I mainly liked getting trained to use the giant dishwasher and having help with the person I was training with. It may have been a little messy and I may have gotten sprayed with the water for rinsing extra food off plates (laughs), but that's why I used an apron and rubber gloves. I will miss seeing all the smiling faces of all of those students at Happy Hearts.

I will miss saying hello to Moe, the Happy Hearts principal who was very helpful helping us mop the floor and putting the tables and chairs back when we were done. I hope all the staff and students have had many good years of fun and a good experience to the staff. I will miss you guys and Moe too!



Kayla Pepp 2-23-2018

### **Brenda Roberts 3-19-18**

Hello,  
I am Kenny's sister. I remember when Kenny was in Happy Hearts years ago. We were pretty young. My mom and dad and I went to Happy Hearts one morning just to see what Kenny was doing.

Kenny and some of the other boys were washing a bus. Everyone seemed happy at work. They were treated like men at work. And they knew that!

Kenny also still has the Christmas ornaments he made at Happy Hearts for his mother's Christmas presents. One he made was a deer out of wood and looks like Rudolph the Red Nose Reindeer. The other present he made was a paper Mache bell with sparkled trim.

Every Christmas when we decorate we always put mom's ornaments Kenny made on the tree! Kenny still talks happy things about Happy Hearts!  
Thank you for caring.

### **Jodi Warren 3-7-18**

When I went to Happy Hearts we used to go to gym. I liked gym. We would go to the YMCA and swim. I started Happy Hearts when I was in kindergarten. Until I was old enough to go to Columbus School of the Blind to learn more skills on being independent.

I remember going swimming in the gym and eating lunch there too. Mrs. Howland and Barb Scott were my teachers.

### **Robert Prine 2-26-18**

Bobby enjoyed his teachers, Miss Penny, and Molly Matthews. They helped him become the young Man he is now. He still talks about them today.

### **Ervin, Fannie, and Ervin III**

Hi,

Our son attended Happy Hearts School from age ten to his graduation at 21 years old. He enjoyed his school. It was in a nice rural country setting- a small school, where everyone knew everyone.

When we took family and visited, everyone took a moment to speak a few words and they were rays of sunshine. Children were friendly and mannerly. It was a close-knit, very safe environment. We enjoyed being at the school's Thanksgiving Dinner and eating with our son.

Very pleasant memories. We are so sad the school will no longer be available to our special needs children. We will miss it also for the reason Erving goes to Happy Hearts on Fridays to work in the cafeteria and always looked forward to that. He loved to work with the cooks. They made it into a good time.

## **Kathy Fisher**

I can't remember too much when I went to school. I started school when I was 2 years old. Mom would carry me out to the bus. I cried, but the bus driver said, "she'll be all right."

I loved to jump on the trampoline and play basketball. I loved all my teachers and the staff that work there. My first teacher took a picture of me. Then when I graduated, she gave me that picture.

She put it on a little frame. There was a little apple and some other stuff on it. Dad, mom, sister, and brothers came to watch me when I graduated. We had cake and ice cream. I still have my outfit. Also, mom came up to have lunch with me for the Thanksgiving Dinner. I wish I could remember more.

## **Katie Begler February 28, 2018**

We have many nice memories of Happy Hearts School. Marvin started going there on September 5, 1995. He would have been almost three years old. He seemed so small to send to that big bus, but he really enjoyed it and didn't seem to mind the long ride back and forth!

I can't remember all his teacher's names. Meg taught him in the term of 1996 and then Cathy Simon in terms in 1997-1998. Elissa in 1999. Deb in 2000 if I have it right. We had a chance to send him to our local Amish School with a special ed class for three terms, from the fall of 2002 until the spring of 2006. Then after that they didn't have a special ed class there so we sent him back to Happy Hearts again.

Jim Kiser was Marvin's last year's teacher at Happy Hearts and Vicki his assistant. Marvin graduated on May 27, 2005, and started at Ash/Craft that summer and is still there. He enjoys going there and also enjoys helping at the cafeteria in Happy Hearts School as a substitute!

We don't have any complaints of Happy Hearts and Ash/Craft and we want to thank everyone for all the support you gave to make Marvin's days at Happy Hearts and Ash/Craft a great success. You will be rewarded!

P.S. We also enjoyed the thanksgiving Dinners you served and always enjoyed

visiting. we felt very welcome, but of course, we didn't visit as often as we would have liked.

## Remembering Them



These are just a few of the countless people who were involved with Happy Hearts School and Ash/Craft Industries for over sixty years. A list of everyone who cared, contributed, nurtured, and whose lives were better because of Happy Hearts and Ash/Craft would fill volumes. Many who aren't named here live where it really matters- in the hearts and minds of the people whose lives they touched.

Remembering is not living in the past, it is appreciating the people who made the present and future possible. Let us all remember.

**Tracy Lee Begin** was a member of the graduating class of 2001, and she was looking forward to her graduation day. She died on April 12, 2001.

**Paula June Bennear** belonged to the Ashtabula County Board of Mental Retardation and the Mental Health Board and she worked with Happy Hearts, Ash/Craft, and other residential organizations. She died June 15, 2008.

**Betty J. Brunell.** Involved in Happy Hearts School and Ash/Craft Industries. She died July 29, 2001.

**Daniel Brunell.** He died October 6, 2004.

**James R. Carlson** was born in Ashtabula on November 15, 1964, and lived in the area all of his life. For 41 years he was a part of Happy Hearts School and Ash/Craft Industries. He loved being with people and visiting. He died on August 20, 2010.

**Juanita A. Horst Clapper** managed the cafeteria at Happy Hearts for many years. She died on December 23, 2017.

**Naoma J. Calaway**, 68, of Ashtabula died October 12, 2002. Born August 4, 1934, in Alama, West Virginia, to Thomas and Lillian G. Spencer Tennant, she had lived in Ashtabula since 1945. She was employed as a workshop specialist for Ash/Craft. She died on October 15, 2002.

**Kim David Covert**. Graduated from Happy Hearts and worked at Ash/Craft. He died January 26, 1999.

**Alison Anne Cowan** graduated from Happy Hearts School and worked at Ash/Craft Industries until she retired in 1998. She participated in the musical, Rock Nativity, for several years and knew all of the words and music to the shows that her father and brother participated in as well. She died on February 5, 2005.

**Maxine A. Custead** was born in Conneaut, Ohio on May 15, 1917, and lived in the area all of her life. She graduated from Ashtabula High School in 1935, and married Lawrence Custead in 1936. She and her husband were instrumental in starting Happy Hearts School and Ash/Craft Industries and she served several years as treasurer and on the original council. She died January 11, 2015.

**Ellen C. Dano** was employed with Ash/Craft Industries. She died January 31, 2001.

**Elizabeth J. “Betty” Dickson**, worked for 25 years as a bus driver for Happy Hearts School. She was one of the founders of the bowling program at Happy Hearts and often drove the students to Columbus for the Special Olympics. She died on September 6, 2011.

**Andrew M. Fields**, 26, of Conneaut, died on June 22, 1998. He graduated from Happy Hearts School in 1993 and he attended East Conneaut United Methodist Church and Sunday School faithfully each week. An antique car enthusiast, he belonged to the National Studebaker Drivers Club. He enjoyed reading, music, and family get togethers.

**Stanley L. Gaumer** of Ashtabula. He served on the Board of Ash/Craft Industries and was instrumental in developing the Park, for Happy Hearts School and Ash/Craft. He died on January 9, 2013.

**Dr. William T. Hall**. Died Sunday, April 7, 1991. He retired in 1981 as Superintendent of the Ashtabula County Board of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities.

**Kellis Holley** umpired for the Special Olympics at Happy Hearts. He died March 25, 2016.

**Elsie Hudson.** Through the years she served as president, secretary, and treasurer of the Ashtabula County Council for Retarded Citizens. She died October 13, 2005.

**Joseph Hunter** was a founding member of Board #169 which was the beginning of the beginning for Happy Hearts School He died June 29, 1995.

**Patricia Olin Hunter**, a registered nurse, and her husband Joseph were founding members of Board #169 which was the beginning of the beginning for Happy Hearts School. She also belonged to the Ashtabula Retardation Council and actively involved with parents of developmentally challenged children. She died June 2, 2017.

**Jodie Lee Imrie.** He worked in the greenhouse at Ash/Craft Industries and taught Sunday School at Bethany Lutheran Church with his mother. He died on May 27, 2005.

**Lucy Anne Johnson** taught seven years at Happy Hearts School. She died March 3, 2005.

**Betty Keho.** She was active in Happy Hearts School and organized the bowling league. She died June 12, 1994.

**Sandra L. Larko** , 21, died July 25, 1992. She would have begun her senior year at Happy Hearts in the fall.

**Anthony John Masters** who worked at Happy Hearts School and Ash/Craft Industries for many years died on November 29, 2014.

**Edward J. Meredyk** died March 4, 1995. He was active in functions at Happy Hearts School where his son attended.

**Larry G. Moroski** was one of the original students at Happy Hearts School that his parents, A. Gene, and Nadine Moroski founded and started as well as Ash/Craft Industries. He was also one of the first students to graduate from Happy Hearts to Ash/ Craft Industries. He also participated in the Special Olympics. He died March 15, 2010.

**Frank A. Nappi**, died Saturday July 19, 1997. He was an Ashtabula businessman and philanthropist who supported Happy Hearts.

**Thomas Nassief** was born March 7, 1927, in Ashtabula, the son of Samuel Nassief and Anna David Nassief. He served as an Ashtabula County Commissioner from 1964 to 1980 and during his tenure he supported Happy Hearts School and Ash/Craft Industries. He died on March 10, 2015.

**Christina Anne Pearson.** Graduated from Happy Hearts in 1993 and worked briefly at Ash/Craft Industries. Her love of country music motivated her to travel to Nashville as well as meet John Schneider of the Dukes of Hazzard several times. She died on September 28, 2008.

**Rodney C. Rowe** retired as a field engineer, and then he worked as a substitute bus driver for Happy Hearts School. He died August 6, 2016.

**Sheila Ann Salvato** graduated from Happy Hearts School in May 1990 and worked at Ash/Craft Industries for a time. A gifted musician, she played with her mother and aunt for six years and later with the Magic Buttons from Cleveland for nine years. While playing the Magic Buttons Sheila made three recordings and traveled to the Caribbean two times. She was a Bronze Life Time Member of the Cleveland Polka Hall of Fame. She died September 8, 2012.

**Dorothy A. Shumake**, Conneaut. She was one of the original staff members at Happy Hearts. She died March 24, 2008.

**Beverly Skarlinski** taught for over twenty years at Happy Hearts School until her retirement. She died March 5, 2018.

**Karen Suzi Szabo** was born on Christmas Day, 1954, in Elyria, Ohio, the daughter of Paul and Nell C. Grambling Laubenthal. She worked at the Ashtabula County Board of Developmental Disabilities for more than 29 years until illness forced her to retire. She died on April 27, 2011.

**James Hamilton Michael Taylor II** graduated from Happy Hearts school and worked at Ash/Craft Industries. He died November 24, 2017.

**Marta L. Triozzi**, teacher at Happy Hearts School. She died in November 2016.

**Melonie K. Weir**. She graduated from Happy Hearts School and worked at Ash/Craft Industries. She died July 24, 2000.

**Joseph J. Zika**. He had been employed at Ash/Craft Industries since 1968. He died on December 24, 2000.



## Special Stories

Remembering Some of the Original Students at Happy Hearts  
(From 1950s Documents)

First Happy Hearts class held in the basement of Elm Avenue Methodist Church in Ashtabula.

### **Daniel G. Brunell's Story – Mrs. Sisson's Class**

Daniel G. Brunell was born August 13, 1948, in Conneaut, the son of Wilho L. and Betty J. Shauberger Brunell and lived in the area all of his life.

He graduated from Happy Hearts School and worked at Ash/Craft Industries in the greenhouse. He was a Boy Scout and a member of Kingsville Presbyterian Church. Daniel died on October 6, 2004.

**Arthur Lee Campbell's Story- Miss Barbara White's class**

Arthur Lee Campbell, the son of Raymond J. and Elizabeth J. Deak Campbell, was born in Ashtabula on May 30, 1946, and remained a lifelong resident of Ashtabula. He worked at Ash/Craft Industries, performing maintenance duties, enjoying his job and the friends he made along the way. A man of many interests and hobbies, he enjoyed BINGO, going to the horse races, playing cards with his family and friends, slot machines, cars, and motorcycles. He loved any type of music and played the tambourine in his sister's band for a number of years. He died June 4, 2013.

**June A. Cichy's Story- Mrs. Bolmeyer's Class**

June A. Cichy was born June 11, 1953, to Melvin and Lottie A. Prokop Cichy in Ashtabula, Ohio and lived all of her life in the Ashtabula-Lake County area. She graduated from Happy Hearts School and went to work at Ash/Craft Industries and Deepwood Industries in Mentor.

County music and word searches topped the list of things June loved and she also enjoyed working. She died June 20, 2011.

**Daniel G. Custead's Story- Miss Barbara White's Class**

Daniel George Custead was born April 26, 1946, in Ashtabula, the son of Lawrence and Maxine Bonnell Custead and lived in the area for the rest of his life. He was one of the original pupils at Happy Hearts School and worked at Ash/Craft Industries. He participated in Special Olympics, especially in bowling and basketball and was an avid Cleveland sports fan. He was a member of the East Side Presbyterian Church. A people friendly person, he was the happiest among family and friends.

He died on December 22, 2008.

**Diane E. Dickson's Story- Dorothy Bishop's Class**

Diane E. Dickson was born on October 4, 1948, in Conneaut, the daughter of Duane and Elizabeth Barlett Dickson. She graduated from Happy Hearts School and lived at Maple for many years to be close to her friends.

An Active person, Diane loved bowling, dancing, going for rides and participating in the Ashtabula County Special Olympics where she won many medals. In her quiet times she liked watching movies like "Chitty Chitty Bang Bang," "Mary Poppins," and "Home Alone."

Her most memorable vacation happened when she went to Walt Disney World to see her favorite character Micky Mouse.

She attended Kingsville First Baptist Church with her mother in years past and enjoyed being around children, especially babies. Diane died on October 22, 2014.

**Kathryn A. Hart- Mrs. Sisson's class**

Kathryn A. Hart was born December 7, 1947, in Canton, Ohio to Leroy and Dorothy Hart. One of the original students at Happy Hearts School, when she



graduated she worked at Ash/Craft until she became ill in November 2010. Kathy was especially proud of awards she won for Special Olympics and bowling. She loved crafts, listening to music, traveling, and visiting family. Kathy died on April 2, 2011.

#### **Carol Louise Horne's Story- Mrs. Bolmeyer's Class**

Carol L. Horne, the daughter of David M. and Generva Patton Horne, was born April 16, 1951, in Ashtabula and remained a life-long resident of the area. She graduated from Happy Hearts school and after her graduation she worked forty years for Ash/Craft Industries. She loved her job and her many friends that she made while employed at Ash/Craft.

A member of Girl Scout Troop #553, she earned many badges and awards. She also enjoyed attending Sunday School at First Presbyterian Church with her friends and they belonged to the "Friendship Class" taught by Inez Gaumer. She also participated in Special Olympics on the track team for many years. She died on May 9, 2011.

#### **Rena's Hudson's Story- Miss Barbara White's Class**

Rena Hudson was born on her mother's 22nd birthday on October 22, 1943, to Myron W. and Elsie E. Hackathorn Hudson in Conneaut. Her family later moved to Pierpont, where she was a life-long resident. She was one of the first students at Happy Hearts School and after she graduated she moved on to Ash/Craft where she worked for over 40 years, never retiring.

She loved working at Ash/Craft where she was named "Worker of the Year." She loved her supervisor and seeing her friends, her bus driver, aides, and everyone working there. She loved family and friends, shopping, visiting, and going out to eat.

Rena died on February 1, 2016.

#### **Patricia A. Kapan's Story – Mrs. Bolmeyer's Class**

Patricia, "Patty" A. Kapan was born on April 20, 1951, in Ashtabula, the daughter of Joseph and Mildred Benetka Kapen. She lived in Ashtabula County all of her life. Patty and her mother were the first members of Happy Hearts School in the 1950's. She worked for Ash/Craft and then later went on to work for Greenlight Workforce LLC where she was known as "Half Pint" and retired in 2016. She loved the Cleveland Indians, listening to music and playing with her dog. She was also involved in the Covered Bridge Committee under Betty Morrison's influence. She died January 23, 2018.

#### **John Pickett's Story-Miss Barbara White's Class**

John E. Pickett, the son of Margie Louise Johns and Edward Joseph Pickett, was born on January 15, 1945, in Ashtabula. He graduated from Happy Hearts School and began working at Ash/Craft Industries in 1967, becoming semi-retired in 2013. As well as being a former member of Boy Scout Troop #24, he belonged to the

LEO Club, The Friendship Class of the First Presbyterian Church of Ashtabula, and the Bridge Class of the First Baptist Church of Kingsville.

**William Roux's Story-. Mrs. Bolmeyer's Class**

William Roux graduated from Happy Hearts School and worked at Ash/Craft Industries for 30 years. He died in October 2000.

**Miss Barbara White's Class**

Paula Berg, Ashtabula; Arthur Campbell, Kingsville; Daniel Custead, Ashtabula; Melanie Walker, Conneaut; Rena Hudson, Pierpont; Francis McLaughlin, Rock Creek; John Pickett, Ashtabula; Carol Sandfield, Ashtabula; Ross Scibona, Geneva; Wanda Hopkins, Conneaut; Donna Bowers, Ashtabula; Paul DiNickle, Ashtabula

**Mrs. Bolmeyer's Class**

June Cichy, Pierpont; Carol Horne, Ashtabula; Patricia Kapen, Jefferson; Linda Meinke, Conneaut; Daniel Morano, Conneaut; William Roux, Jefferson; Thomas Utter, Geneva; Robert Von Tesmar, Ashtabula; James Weagraff, Ashtabula; William Barrett, Ashtabula; Sharon Ann Jones, Geneva; James Kessler, Ashtabula

**Mrs. Dorothy Bishop's Class**

Richard Bowers, Ashtabula; Frankie Brown, Ashtabula; Wayne Copeland, Ashtabula; Diane Dickson, Conneaut; Virginia Gregory, Geneva; Rose Mauro, Ashtabula; Barbara Marano, Conneaut; Orville Pickett, Ashtabula; Barbara Weddle, Jefferson; Dorothy Wilkison, Geneva; Nancy Freeman, Orwell; Mary Davies, Ashtabula

**Mrs. Sisson's Class**

Daniel Brunell, Kingsville; Rebecca DiNickle, Ashtabula; Michael Forbes, Conneaut; Clair Hadden, Orwell; Kathy Hart, Orwell; Mary Kehoe, Conneaut; John Morano, Conneaut

## Chapter Twenty: Oh, the Places You'll Go!

“We had no place to go before this group. Even our doctors usually said to institutionalize the child or take them home and give them all the love you can.”

Nadine Moroski



Happy Hearts and Ash/Craft Grow People Potential-  
A Lifelong Album

Special Story:

Happy Hearts Helped Patch My Leaky Sneakers and Go Places!

by Kathy Covert (Warnes)

”Onward up many a frightening creek, though your arms may get sore and your sneakers may leak. Oh! The places you'll go!”

[Dr. Seuss, Oh, The Places You'll Go!](#)

My eight-year-old self watched my mother and dad open the gate of the white picket fence around our house in Ecorse, Michigan. I didn't want to look at the baby in her arms, especially since I already knew he was a boy and his name was Kim. It didn't even help that as the oldest child, she trusted me with the information that Kim's brain had been damaged when he was born and he couldn't learn as fast as the rest of us did. I wasn't surprised to hear that he wouldn't learn as fast as I could because my girlfriends and I already knew that girls were MUCH smarter than boys.

My mom asked me to help her take special care of Kim because he had to learn more slowly than my three other brothers. I looked at that howling baby named Kim who seemed more like another babysitting bother than a baby brother. Little did I know that we both would end up at a school called Happy Hearts in Ashtabula, Ohio, at different times in our lives. Then, I was more interested in hurrying to my school to stick out my tongue at the boy in the seat behind me. I would rather have worn a ruffled dress to school than to admit that I had a crush on him! It was a lot safer to stick out my tongue at him.

I read to Kim because he couldn't read himself. I read Dr. Seuss books like "The Cat in the Hat," "Fox and Sox," and "Green Eggs and Ham" to him. Often at night while I lay in my bedroom doorway reading by myself under the hallway light and ready to hurry back to bed as soon as I heard parental footsteps, my mother and father's voices arguing about Kim floated up the stairs. The doctor had advised them to put Kim in an institution.

My mother scrambled for hope. In my mother's 1950s, 1960s, having a retarded child time, hope didn't often surface. Doctors often told devastated parents to institutionalize their children and forget about them when all they wanted was hope that their children would be educated to the range of their abilities and lead a productive life. She dreamed of a better life for Kim and she knew she and not an institution could find it. My father didn't explore that dream with her. My father built a chain link fence from his perception of the life Kim would have and locked Kim firmly inside it.

Kim watched the rest of his growing ranks of brothers and sisters go off to grade school and he wanted to tag along. I watched him stumble behind us. Even when the school opened its doors to him, Kim could only hesitate both academically and physically on the first of the concrete steps that the rest of us climbed so easily. He struggled to wrest letters from the squiggly shapes the teacher kept talking about and to understand the black marks that lived on the pages of the books.

My mother struggled to find patient teachers who wanted to help Kim and possessed the Special Education training to teach him. Kim struggled to fit into the elementary school routine. His older brothers fought the playground bullies who teased him and called him a retard. I punched the loudest one of them in the stomach hard enough to double him over and spit on him to seal the deal. I'm still not sorry for doing that.

Some of the teachers in our schools cared enough to do what they could to help Kim, but others considered him a distraction and disruption in their classes. There were only a few scattered Special Education classes in our school district and I remember just a few generic ones in our high school. The "Special Education" label glowed like the neon sign on White Castle Hamburger restaurant by the Detroit River. Special Education kids belonged in another world and most of us wanted to keep them on the outskirts of our worlds.

Absorbed in my own teenage world, I sometimes ignored Kim, and even sometimes felt a stab of resentment accompanied by a stab of shame because he was different, and loud. I watched how he struggled to keep up with my brothers. He liked to play baseball and basketball with them and sometimes they didn't really want to play with him. No one knew that he would eventually be on the Happy Hearts basketball team, an achievement he would loudly point out to my brothers every chance he got.

It took moving to Geneva, Ohio, for my mother to finally find a school that would change Kim's life. She enrolled him in Happy Hearts School which had been operating about eight years by the time he became a student. A group of local parents of special needs children founded Happy Hearts School in 1954, because there were no local facilities to teach their children and the public schools were reluctant to accept them. Community and parental support grew enough in pupils and teachers to merit state aide and offered a quality curriculum and qualified teachers and staff. The idea of a school to help special needs people develop to their full potential and lead happy and productive lives helped parents of retarded and developmentally disabled children transition from despair for their children to hope and possibility.

The Happy Hearts curriculum enabled parents to experience the joy of viewing their children's artwork on display in the community, participate in school plays and programs, and play sports. Mike DeMarino, the school's music teacher, started a band, the Orff Band, which toured the country and performed at the Kennedy Center in New York City as well as locally and regionally. Happy Hearts inspired

and changed the lives of teachers, students, and parents. Happy Hearts changed Kim's life and although it took a more circular path and more years, it impacted my life too.

It took moving to Geneva, Ohio, to a farmhouse with a furnace to enhance Kim's athletic skills. The farmhouse had a coal furnace and Kim's chores included stoking the fire every winter day. By the time he graduated from Happy Hearts, he had coal fueled iron muscles that could sink baskets, lift boxes, and throw strike producing bowling balls. He also participated in the Boy Scouts and wore his uniform like a proud parent. My Mom was the proud parent. She led the Happy Hearts Girl Scout troop and assisted with the Cub Scouts, and she attended all of Kim's Boy Scout events. My Dad still held him at arm's length, but Kim went places!

From the next few stages of my life, I watched Kim from afar as I traveled to my own places, sometimes onward up many a frightening creek. He graduated from Happy Hearts, and went to work at Ash/Craft Industries, a sheltered workshop that was part of the Happy Hearts mission of training and enabling mentally retarded people from birth to adulthood. At Ash/Craft he acquired a reputation for loud talking, (He thought he had to shout over his hearing aid) a kind heart, and a determined work ethic. He worked so diligently and thoroughly that his Workshop Specialists chose him as Worker of the Year for 1981. He glowed with pride for years after his award. Kim went places!



*Kim, second from left, is named Worker of the year, 1981, with my Mom, Dorothy Covert, standing proudly next to him.*

My arms got sore and my sneakers leaked as I married, divorced, and my daughter Jill and I moved away from my parents and Kim. Jill and I read *The Cat in the Hat* and *Green Eggs and Ham* and other Dr. Seuss books for some of her bedtime stories.

Jill went to an elementary school that mainstreamed retarded and developmentally disabled children and she developed a heart for them and skill in dealing with them and their problems. Even though she was his niece, Jill considered Kim her "better than family" friend. She liked Kim's genuineness and gentleness flowing under his blustery surface.

After working at Ash/Craft Industries for several years, Kim moved with my father and mother when they then left Ohio for Texas. He spent years working in Texas and retired from a manufacturing plant there. He enjoyed living and continued to practice his hobbies including collecting clocks and weaving rugs.

One of the major problems that parents with mentally retarded and developmentally disabled children face is ensuring who will care for their children after they die. I knew my mother had made arrangements for Kim, so I didn't worry about him. In the back of my mind I took it for granted that if Kim did need a home, he would come with me.

In 1994, my mother died and my father remarried a woman who couldn't handle Kim and his problems. He didn't honor the arrangements my mother had made for Kim which had provided a home for him until he died. When he died five years later, instead of being buried with my mother as she had wished, Kim is buried far away from her in another state.

For years, I carried bitterness against my father and what I perceived as his weakness and cruelty toward Kim like a rock. Why would God plan such a thing for my mother and Kim?

Then in 2016, my daughter Jill who had become a pediatric nurse, died in a kayak accident. In her will she specified that the book, *Oh, the Places You'll Go*, by Dr. Seuss be read at her memorial service and she left a copy in her things for me to find. I read this last book that Dr. Seuss wrote and published before his own death through my heartbroken tears over my daughter's death

Most days I rocked back and forth with grief on the inside while robot-walking through my life on the outside. I knew God didn't even hear me, much less have a plan for my life and the lives of the people I love. Jill is in heaven because she loves God and God loves her, but she drowned because of the laws of biology and physics, not theology.

Shortly after we moved back to Ohio from Michigan, I read in the local newspaper that Happy Hearts might close its doors because of financial problems, and even if it stayed open it would continue under different circumstances. I wanted to record its impact on Kim's life and the lives of so many other parents and children and School Superintendent Anne Zeitler accepted my offer to write Happy Hearts and Ash/Craft Industries history.

I didn't imagine Happy Hearts would write the next chapter in my personal history as well. As part of writing the School's history, I went to the graduation ceremonies of the last class to graduate from the old version of the school that has existed since 1954. The graduation speaker, Carol Mentges, quoted these lines from "Oh, the Places You'll Go," by Dr. Seuss.

"Congratulations!  
Today is your day.  
You're off to Great Places!  
You're off and away!"

God's voice has finally penetrated my fog of grief and living on automatic pilot. Life has frightening creeks for all of us and we navigate them in different ways. My father navigated his frightening creek the only way he knew how, and forgiveness is part of God's plan for all of us. I have to forgive him.

Retreating from life both inside ourselves and outwardly, is not living. As long as we are open to life's hope and possibilities that God plans and provides, we can cross the frightening creeks and be off and away to great places that we help create. I am off and away again!

The history, legacy, and hope of Happy Hearts can be off and away again, too. Happy Hearts has taken countless parents, students, teachers, and many other people to good places where they didn't expect to go. Let's continue the journey.





