



Connections

SUMMER 2000

Independent Living Program

Our friends with disabilities teach us important lessons

By Wayne Smith

Our friends with disabilities often remind us that simple is good. How often have you been blown away by the complete confidence, utter joy, and total trust of a person with mental retardation? How often has the unknowable been seen clearly through the eyes of these friends, who, like the Rose in *The Little Prince*, know that it is "only with the heart that one can see rightly."

Through the CCFH Independent Living Program, we give our new residents new freedom and confidence. We help them explore God's world, with all of its bruises and warts, and we hold their hand

when the task looks too big.

We will take them into our community, and we will infect it with their smile. We will introduce them to new jobs, employers, commuters, and cashiers. We will model for a sometimes-uninformed community, that people with mental retardation are real people.

When we bring new residents to Knoxville, it will become a better city. When the new employee comes to your business, it will become a better company. When the new neighbor moves into the apartment next to you, it will become a better place to live.

The big hearts, smiles, and hugs, that our special friends, sons and daughters, enjoy and gladly share, are a special gift that God has given us, through them.

It is with this gift that we



RIVERWOOD RESIDENT CAROL PEELLEN FINDS MEANING IN HER WORK AT TACO BELL

will celebrate Jesus through the Independent Living Program at CCFH in the

year 2000. Join us as we celebrate! †

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...By Involvement

By Mike Rife Minister Vansant Church of Christ

Just about everyone can relate to some type of celebration at one time or another in his or her life. For some it is a birthday party; for others it is a bridal shower. Some do not need special occasions; they just celebrate.

What about church celebration? We do celebrate church, don't we? Sure we do. Just like other celebrations, all of us in many different ways Celebrate Jesus.

Some celebrate by saying a loud "Amen!" Others may just give a nodding of the head. Some like to shout, raise their hands, applaud, and use many other forms of celebrating.

Let me tell you of some special people at church who celebrate in special ways. For a guy named Paul, his way of celebrating is standing at the door of the auditorium while everyone is exiting and handing everyone a piece of bubble gum. He gives out about 300 pieces every Sunday.

Sam is Paul's friend; Sam loves to get to church early to greet everyone as they enter. Sam knows all by



RIVERWOOD RESIDENT REX ROUSH HELPS THE CONGREGATION CELEBRATE JESUS!

name and greets by name. His hardy handshake and huge smile are a great welcome for our visitors.

Rodney loves to know if people are leaving town because he likes to receive newspapers from other towns and cities and keep up with news from around the nation.

I am confident that just about every congregation has a Sam, Paul or Rodney. If you could see them, you could quickly see that these individuals stand out and how they make our congregation special.

All battle difficult challenges. Their minds aren't like everyone else's. Their

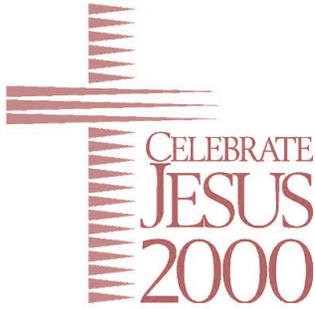
physical appearance may not match everyone else, but they do not let it stand in their way when it comes to Sunday and Celebrating Jesus.

On Sunday, April 30, the Vansant Church of Christ celebrated Special Needs Sunday with Jim Pierson from CCFH. This was by far the best and most touching Sunday we had experienced in quite a while.

You see, our congregation, like many others, has a number of challenged individuals. What is our responsibility to these individuals? Be like Jesus! Make them feel welcome, make them feel important, make them feel like they are part of God's Kingdom and they are.

Jim challenged us with God's Word to become more sensitive to the needs of individuals who may not look like us, think like us, or talk like us. They are special to Jesus and if they are special to Jesus, that makes them no different than us.

So let's Celebrate Jesus with ALL! †



...By Disability Awareness

By Jim Pierson

One of the favorite parts of my job as Executive Director is making congregations aware of the spiritual needs of people with disabilities.

From January through April of this year, I visited the following churches:

- Englewood Christian Church, Jacksonville, Florida
- First Christian Church, Abingdon, Virginia
- Nesconset Christian Church, Nesconset, New York
- Northside Christian Church, Marietta, Georgia
- Vansant Church of Christ, Vansant, Virginia

In Englewood, Abingdon, and Northside, it was a time of renewing our ties with congregations who have supported the ministry for a long time. I was impressed that Englewood's children took a pretend airplane ride to Knoxville to visit Riverwood. The refreshments were peanuts and a drink. Children are being made aware of their role in helping their friends who have disabilities. At First Christian in Abingdon, I came home knowing that a congregation was aware of the importance of making

Jesus known to the disability population. Northside's members reaffirmed their commitment to helping meet the needs of persons with disabilities with encouraging words and a huge offering.

Nesconset and Vansant were exposed for the first time to the ministry of CCFH. In both cases there was enthusiasm for the ministry. Many individuals in New York have sent gifts to the ministry. Persons with a variety of disabilities attend Vansant and they already use inclusion. They are beginning an outreach in their community.

I often use a specific story in my disability awareness sermons that celebrates Jesus' ministry with persons with disabilities.

Based on the story of Jesus' healing the man with a physical disability, brought to Jesus by four friends, I stress that friends are a major reason people attend church. Our friends with disabilities need a friend to help them. When the crowd around the house where Jesus was teaching prevented the four friends from taking their friend to Him, they carried him up on the roof, removed part of it, and lowered him to Jesus.

The point I stress is that it was the faith of the friends that brought about

the healing. Our faith in what Jesus can do for our friends with disabilities will attract His attention and He will respond.

Whether in Florida, New York, Virginia, or Georgia, churches are becoming increasingly aware of the spiritual needs of the disability community.

Celebrating Jesus' approach is an excellent way of making people aware of the importance of sharing the Good News



JIM PIERSON

with everyone regardless of ability. The point becomes all the more personal when we realize that our friendship with a person with a disability can make an eternal difference. †

CCFH to participate in North American Christian Convention

CCFH will be attending the North American Christian Convention, July 11-14, in Louisville, KY.

The convention's theme is "Celebrate Jesus 2000," which we have carried through in this newsletter. CCFH will have a display in the convention's exhibit hall.

The North American Christian Convention is an open annual gathering of Christians committed to the Lordship of Christ and the authority of the Bible as God's Word. Members of Christian Churches and Churches of Christ in the United States, Canada, and Mexico attend, as well as individuals from around the world. †



How you can help CCFH help people with disabilities

- ☛ USE OUR VBS MATERIALS IN YOUR CHURCH
- ☛ SPONSOR A RESIDENT
- ☛ INVITE A SPEAKER FOR A DISABILITY AWARENESS SUNDAY
- ☛ PUT US IN YOUR BUDGET
- ☛ SHARE THE WORK OF CCFH WITH A FAMILY EXPERIENCING DISABILITY

CCFH has materials and speakers available for those interested in having a Disability Awareness Sunday. Our list of materials follows. Please contact us if we can be of service to you.

Resource Packets — \$2 each

- How to Begin a Disability Ministry.
- Disability Awareness for Congregations.
- How to Begin a Deaf/Hard of Hearing Ministry.
- Disability Awareness for Children.
- Programs, Teacher Training, and Materials in Disability Ministry.
- Encouraging Volunteers.
- Inclusion in Sunday School.
- Teaching Learners with Mental Retardation.
- Autism: Information and Inclusion Strategies.
- Including Students with Learning Disabilities in Sunday School.
- Including Persons with Physical Disabilities in the Life of the Church.
- Integrating the Visually Disabled in Church.
- How Churches Can Minister to People with Mental Illness.
- Ministering with the Family Experiencing Alzheimer's Disease.
- Ministering with the Family Experiencing Disability.

- Ministering Through Respite Care.
- Including Learners with Special Health Problems in the Sunday School.
- Providing Typical Ministry Opportunities for the Person with a Disability (available October 2000).

Lesson Materials — \$5 each

- A Place For Me in God's Family.
- A Year of Lessons for Special Learners.

Lesson Series — \$2.50 each

- His Hands, His Heart.
- God Can Use Me.
- Reach Out Like Jesus.

Materials Special

Buy the books *No Disabled Souls* (\$8.50) and *Just Like Everybody Else* (\$6) and get a free copy of the book, *Reaching Out to Special People*.

Reaching Out to Special People is also available free with a purchase of \$20 or more in educational materials.

Free Lessons

CCFH has 2000 Vacation Bible School lessons remaining. These lessons can be adapted for use in a children's Sunday School class and are free of charge. †



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