

Bible school opens with Balloon Day

By CAROL CLAPP

About 70 balloons, fresh from the hands of their owners, float through the sky, slowly drifting ever upward and to the north. The one that drifts the farthest will bring to its owner, and its finder, a prize.

The balloons are many-colored, and each has a biblical picture—Adam and Eve, Jonah and the Whale, and many more—on one side. On the other side is an emblem and the words AAL Association for Lutherans (AAL).

On the end of a string hanging from each balloon is a square, white piece of paper with a brief message and the balloon owner's name. Also on it is the address of Prince of Peace Lutheran Church in Farmington Hills, from which all these colorful balloons have been released.

Called, for obvious reasons, Balloon Day, this brief ceremony is a traditional part of the church Vacation Bible School.

The AAL sponsors Balloon Day, providing the balloons, the helium for the balloons, the paper tags, the string, and the prizes. This year, according to AAL secretary Betty Burrell, the prizes will be books, still to be chosen, on appropriate religious themes.

Balloon Day has been an annual event at the church since 1965. There have been some changes made, though, and mostly for the better, according to Audrey Bowditch, chairman of the board of Christian education.

For the first time, the summer school is just one-week long, rather than two, and Mrs. Bowditch says that this makes it much easier on both the teachers and the students.

"You run into people's vacations with a Vacation Bible School," Mrs. Bowditch says.

"This year, most of our children from the Sunday School are here," she says. "I can only think of about 12 who aren't, and they are on vacation." congregation.

Another change is that this year, the school is for children five years old through the sixth grade. In past years, tots as young as three and seventh graders were also part of the program.

"We have the seventh graders helping with the younger kids this year," Mrs. Bowditch says. "It makes them feel useful, they like to help."

"Four of our seven teachers have children enrolled this year," she says. "One of them has four. She said she should teach for at least four years, one for each of them, and this is her first."

Mrs. Bowditch says that even though this is her first year directing the school, there have been no special problems.

"We started planning in February, when the publishing houses started offering the materials," she says. "With all the good people who are helping, everything has gone quite well."



Who's balloon will travel the farthest? That's the question for 70 youngsters who let go as many balloons when Prince of Peace

Lutheran Church followed its tradition of Balloon Day to mark the opening of vacation Bible school. (Staff photo by Harry Mauthe)

Cute puppy finds new job at age 1

By KAREN KOPEKIN

Patty Wilkinson raised an award-winning black Labrador named Midnight for the past year but now she must give the friendly puppy away. But it's all for a good cause.

Patty, an 11-year-old Livonia girl, raised the puppy for the Leader Dog for the Blind School in Rochester. Working through her 4-H club, Patty received the dog from the school in hopes that he would eventually become one of the world famous leader dogs.

The puppy program, run by the Leader Dog school in cooperation with local 4-H clubs, has been in existence for seven years.

The program puts puppies of three breeds, German Shepherd, Golden Retriever and Labrador, in carefully screened homes for youngsters to

raise for one year. The object of the program is to provide a regular supply of dogs for training as leader dogs.

PATTY, who will be a sixth grader at Roosevelt Elementary School in the fall, put Midnight in the leader dog school in February.

"The last I heard, he was second in his class," she said.

As part of the 4-H program, Patty took Midnight to once-a-week 4-H classes for a year. It was there she learned how to train and care for him.

"I had to teach him how to walk with me, how to sit quietly when I said to, and how to sit next to me during mealtime without begging," Patty said.

She showed Midnight at the Michigan State Fair last fall and won five trophies. "We won one first and one

second place," she said.

The aim of the leader dog puppy program is to expose a potential leader dog to the noise and confusion of family life so that he is a well-socialized dog when he enters advanced training.

"What we really want is the dog to know love and a home life before he is trained," says Karen Blake of the Rochester school.

THE PUPPY program was designed with the assumption that a dog that has grown up in a home will be a

well-rounded and happy dog and will not be as nervous around people as a dog that has grown up in a kennel.

At one-tenth the cost, the puppy program is, according to Ms. Blake, as successful as programs in other states where the dogs are raised by paid individuals or in kennels.

After the dog leaves the family home he is placed in leader dog training for three to six months. The dog is also matched up with a blind student who is trained with him. Presently, the school has 40 dogs in training.

Senior power organizing

Formation of an Oakland County Senior Power Task Force will be the topic of a 9:30 a.m. meeting Thursday in the Beech Woods Arena, Beech and Nine Mile in Southfield.

Co-sponsors of the task force to provide political clout for the elderly

are the Michigan Citizens Lobby and Area Agency on Aging.

Rep. David Hollister (D-Lansing), who is involved with the Ingham County Senior Power Task Force, will be the speaker.

For more information, call the Michigan Citizens Lobby at 559-9250.

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