

# Soupy shuffles into telethon for the retarded

By SHIRLEE IDEN

Sometimes life seems unfair and a child is born impaired.

Three out of every 100 babies born each year are mentally retarded to some degree.

The causes vary, with some babies suffering damage before birth or during delivery. Other causes of retardation are never discovered.

But of the known causes, about half are preventable today.

One of the goals of the upcoming Soupy's Telethon for the Retarded is to make people aware of the many things they can do to prevent retardation and other disabilities. The other is to help the tens of thousands already afflicted.

If you ask Don Lightfoot, why he helps arrange the Telethon, he'll say: "Everyone knows someone who's retarded."

Lightfoot, a Southfield businessman, has no retarded person in his family, but a neighbor child is "special."

That's why his wife, Sara, and children Amy, 7, and Jon, 6, understand his

great enthusiasm for the telethon coming on June 2 and 3.

"It's our 7th annual telethon for retarded citizens," he said. "We have high hopes of grossing \$1 million this year."

Lightfoot said Soupy's Telethon was widely criticized last year for the percentage of expenses taken from the gross by a news reporter from a Detroit daily.

"After the criticism an audit was made by the attorney general and he found the results acceptable," Lightfoot said. "People forget that the initial expenses of this kind of undertaking are what is high. Once you overcome those, the percentages change."

He said it will take \$90,000 for the telethon, scheduled on Channel 20, to break even.

"Our phone bills alone will run more than \$10,000," he said.

To overcome the large nut they must crack to make the effort successful, the telethon organizers have reached out to major corporations this year, asking them to purchase an hour of television time.



SOUPY SALES

DON LIGHTFOOT

"A prime hour costs \$5,000 and non-prime time runs \$2,500," he said. As in the past, the telethon is sponsored by many companies, civic, fraternal and employee groups.

Soupy Sales will be the prime host, as in the past. Gov. William Milliken and Wayne County Sheriff William Lucas are honorary co-chairmen.

Lightfoot said Mayor Donald Fracas has declared the week of May 29 "Retardation Week" and issued a suitable proclamation.

This year's telethon will originate from Detroit's Light Guard Armory, 4400 East Eight Mile in Detroit and will be carried for 24 continuous hours from 6 p.m. Saturday, June 2, to 6 p.m. Sunday.

Comedian Sales will be right up front for all of those hours.

Although he is a fixture on television shows from New York and Hollywood, he still calls Detroit home.

"I owe a lot to Detroit and Michigan and the telethon gives me a chance to pay back the opportunities I received here," he said.

The comic's television rise began back in 1953 in Detroit, where he was a top-rated television personality for seven years. Characters such as Black Tooth, White Fang, the Lone Stranger

and Walter Charles Vicssoise were favorites of children and adults alike.

And who doesn't remember the Soupy Shuffle, the pie in the face, and the floppy bow-tie which became his trade-marks and also made show business history?

His "Soupy Sales Show" by 1966 was in syndication and seen in 50 U.S. cities as well as Canada, Australia and New Zealand.

Each year when he "comes home" the comic proves that even comedians have a serious side to them.

Since its inception, Soupy Sales' Telethon has netted nearly \$300,000 for Michigan organizations. The recipients of the grants are determined by a special committee. All funds raised here are spent in Michigan.

There are approximately six million retarded citizens in the country — some 265,000 of them in Michigan. More than 100,000 retarded babies will be born this year.

For further information about the telethon for retarded persons, call 964-4453.

Maria Durante, noted Flamenco dancer, will appear in Farmington Community Center's fifth annual International Ethnic Festival at 8:30 p.m. Friday, June 1. The dancer, who has studied with Jose Greco in Madrid and Manolo Vargas in Mexico City, joins a line-up of entertainers who share the music and dance of their heritage during the festivities.



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