

# TV — a 'fun way to improve reading'

By Joanne Mallazowski staff writer

Not too long ago, researchers found that hearing-impaired children improved their reading skills by watching closed-captioned television.

Farmington Hills resident Marilyn Droz wants to go a step further and see if the same happens when learning disabled children use closed-captioned television.

"This is going to be a real fun way to improve reading," said the Royal Oak teacher and chairwoman of the Committee for Children's Television.

To raise money for the research project, CCT is sponsoring a fund-raiser 6:30-8:30 p.m. Friday, at the Detroit Science Center, at the corner of John R and East Warren, Detroit.

"The whole place is ours to enjoy. It should be a fun, entertaining evening," Droz said. "The profits will go for research. Our dues and membership cover expenses."

The movie "Seasons" will be shown during the fund-raiser, at which clowns will entertain, and a picnic dinner, courtesy of Elias Brothers Big Boy restaurants, will be served.

Tickets for a family of four are \$25. Tickets for each additional child are \$2. Tickets also can be purchased at the door for \$20. Reservations can be made by calling the CCT offices, 6255 Telegraph, Birmingham, by calling 642-7919.

The approximately 1,000-member organization works closely with television stations to ensure better programming for children. "We evaluate, initiate information for viewing."

AS CHAIRWOMAN, Droz is particularly involved with reviewing shows.

"We are against censorship. I don't think we need that," said Droz.

a special education and reading consultant. "Every television came with a censor button since 1945 — it's called the 'on-and-off'."

When reviewing shows, the organization either will write to sponsors expressing concerns about the program material or, if a local show, discuss their concerns with local program directors and sponsors.

"When we don't approve a show, we back it up with research. We're not a radical organization. We don't do boycotts," she said.

Each show is evaluated on its own merits rather than on "blanket standards" for children's programming. "Somewhere along the line we invented this wonderful thing called childhood. But television doesn't make a distinction.

"Children are watching programs that deal with adult themes. But kids don't have the background and knowledge to deal with the themes."

For example, the organization reviewed the long-running "Facts of Life." For pre-teens, the show is excellent. "It asks good questions. But not for 4-5 year-olds," Droz said.

IN FACT, Droz maintains that today television doesn't offer the number of children's shows that were offered 10-20 or more years ago. She also strongly believes that parents must be active in their children's television viewing.

The organization also offers a speakers bureau, a curriculum development program and monitors and initiates legislation.

"We even got a letter from a Korean television organization that heard about our curriculum," Droz said.

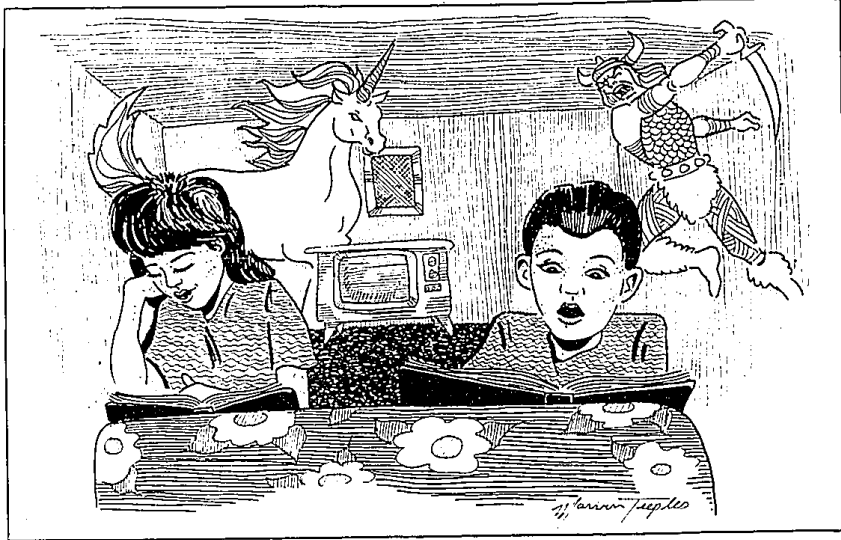
Droz uses television as an integral part of education. From certain television programs, students can learn thinking skills, the handling of social situations, vocabulary and story plots, she said.

Earlier this year, Droz received a \$2,500 Education Service Enhancement Grant from the special education division of the state Department of Education for television training plan, which involves using a televi-

sion and video recorder in the classroom.

She also is an author with one published book, "Reading Without Words," and another in the wings, titled "TV (Teaching Values) through TV."

Droz encourages interested parents and teachers to become involved in CCT. The type and amount of participation is up to the individual member. Some members are content to simply receive the organization's monthly newsletter. Others are involved in previewing programs and still others are involved in legislative matters.



A fund-raiser to benefit research for closed-captioned television as a learning tool is scheduled for this Friday. Illustration by Marvin Teepes

# Youngsters learn healthy appreciation for life

By Casey Hens staff writer

Children at the First Step day care center are saying thank.

As our country approaches the Thanksgiving holiday, they're learning to be thankful for everything they have, and most importantly, for their good health.

"We've been talking about how we should be thankful for many things," said Laila Sherwin, director of the First Step center at the YMCA near 12 Mile and Farmington roads.

The children participated recently in a weeklong program, learning an awareness for handicapped people and their needs.

"We try to do these things all year long," Sherwin said. "My purpose is basically . . . alerting children to the understanding of children having less than others."

A Hopathon for muscular dystrophy, learning to maneuver a wheelchair and crutches, a puppet show with information about handicapped people, and learning about blindness with the use of blindfolds were all part of the program, coordinated by teachers Marybeth Hetrick and Karen Voight.

AS PART of the program, one of the children attending the center, Jeff Lantz, told friends about his aunt who has cerebral palsy. It was a different kind of learning experience, special because of the personal involvement for the child and his friends. The children attending First Step range in age from 2½ to 5½ years.

"I think our kids are becoming very sensitive," Sherwin added.

The center not only holds these weekly, informational sessions, but also employs several people with handicaps with whom the students have become friends. There are also many employees and children of different ethnic origins, which also teaches about differences of another sort.

During the recent week children "learned not to make fun — they were listening to us," Hetrick added.

THE MUSCULAR Dystrophy Association of Greater Detroit helped the YMCA plan its Hopathon and handicap awareness program, and received proceeds from the children who got parents and relatives to sponsor them on a per-hop basis. This Hopathon program is done throughout Metro Detroit in the fall and spring each year, according to Karen Basset, program coordinator.

Basset said such programs are important. She stresses that information about handicapped people needs to be taught as soon as possible. "It starts with the very young," she said. "The whole idea is to reach as many people as we can."

"The approach is that everyone's different, no one's perfect. It is in well with Thanksgiving, where we're thankful for what we've got."

On the average, day care centers raise about \$200 in their Hopathons. About 30 Oakland County day care centers participated in the program this year.

The First Step staff in Farmington Hills plans to follow up the fall program with another health-related week this winter, when health professionals will talk with the children about hospital procedures and other health issues.

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— Laila Sherwin  
First Step director  
Farmington Area YMCA



Jennifer Stanton, 5, (front) and Deereee Billings, 5, participate in the day care Hopathon.

Four-year-old Stephanie Dabroski learns what it is like to be in a wheelchair as part of the YMCA's handicap awareness week. Also pictured are teacher Marybeth Hetrick and aide Kelly Cassar.

Reading to improve throughout schools

Members of a study committee in Farmington schools are continuing revisions to the district's reading curriculum, according to Information from the district.

The effort follows a two-week workshop last summer, when 22 Farmington teachers met to rewrite district reading goals. From this has come a recommendation for a new Basal Reading Series for grades kindergarten through six.

The committee has met weekly to discuss textbooks and other materials for such a program, according to Carolyn Mahalak of the reading services department.

The committee is expected to sample two series in early 1988, and make a recommendation for the new program which is scheduled to begin in September 1988.

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