



Blessing the animals

Blessing of Animals is a tradition for children who attend school St. Fabian. The event celebrates the Feast of St. Francis of Assisi, the patron Saint of the Bernardine Franciscan Sisters who serve the school. The Rev. Norbert Kendzierski (at



left) officiates at the prayer service which includes the faculty, students, their parents and their pets. At right, Greg Kozlowski and Jackie Donamore discovered they had look-alike dogs.

Special children joined with families

Preservation of the family is an important issue for Catholic Social Services. This is never more evident than in the Foster Care program of the agency.

Foster Care is the temporary removal of a child or children from the home of the parent for the mental and/or physical health of the child. Professional staff work with the parent and child to bring reconciliation as soon as possible.

When Margie's parents died, her brother, his wife and three children plus another male friend moved into the family home, which already housed Margie and her five children. The house was small. The adults abused alcohol and drugs daily. Adult males slept in the same room as the young girl children, and sexually molested them. The house was filthy. On the rare occasions the children went to school, their clothes and bodies were dirty. A school social worker notified Protective Services, and they, in turn brought Catholic Social Services into the picture.

At this point everyone in the house left — and left Margie with \$3,000 worth of utility bills. In addition, the court ordered her children to be placed in temporary foster care. With help and encouragement from the agency staff, Margie entered an alcohol treatment program, got a job at Taco Bell, and began to pay

off the bills. She was allowed to see her children once a week under supervision. Meanwhile the foster parents took the children to regularly scheduled counseling appointments, a group alcohol and drug prevention program, and saw to it that the children went to school.

Margie stayed sober for one and a half years, paid off her debt, and changed her behavior. The court allowed her three girls to come home. The boys were more incorrigible. Finally, after another nine months of separation and hard work, the whole family was reunited. They will be seen by an agency worker periodically for another six months as they all adjust to the new way of life.

THE FAMILIES who take in special needs foster children are carefully screened, trained, supervised and licensed by the Social Services staff. The foster family is an integral part of the plan for the child's return home. They assume temporary parental responsibilities including education, visitation, medical and counseling appointments.

Sometimes the child cannot return home. Parental rights are terminated because the parent is unwilling or unable to change behavior and take care of the child. In these instances the child then becomes available for adoption. These children become state wards. They may be physically

or emotionally handicapped, mentally retarded, older, and/or a minority. Some may be part of a sibling group of two or more who need to be placed together.

It takes a very special type of person to be able to welcome some of these children into the home. Prospective adoptive parents participate in a series of group assessment and evaluation meetings, which help them to decide whether or not to adopt. When assessments and home studies are completed, families are ready for one or more children.

Families are found for the children. Children are not found for the families.

Adoption and foster care for special needs children require special workers with specific skills to make sure that the children get the best care available for them. Anyone interested in exploring the possibility of becoming a special needs foster parent or adoptive parent, call Joanne Blake at 333-3700.

All families, at times, have problems. Often help from a third party is all that is needed to resolve difficulties. The United Way Agency, provides substance abuse prevention and treatment programs for children, teens, adults, and older adults. Counselors can help families set goals and work toward attaining

those goals.

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Housing developer is elected to board

David A. Fons was elected to the Michigan Manufactured Housing Association board of directors by the general membership in the annual election. His new position as an MMHA Director will help steer the industry in such areas as legislation, insurance and liability, industry professionalism, public relations and marketing.

MMHA is a non-profit state trade association representing the manufactured housing industries. It is a division under the umbrella of the Michigan Manufactured Housing, Recreational Vehicle and Campground Association (MMH & RVCA) headquartered in Livonia.

Fons has been a manufactured housing retailer and broker since 1974, and works for Quality Homes in Farmington Hills. Currently Quality Homes has offices in 36 manufactured housing communities.



David Fons

Fons has developed several mobile home communities — most recently Commerce Meadows in Wixom. He became a member of MMHA in 1986, the year he got involved in the manufactured housing industry. Fons is also a member of the

MMH & RVCA executive board which makes all the final decisions for the association. He lives in Farmington Hills with his wife, Melinda, and their children, Kelly and Andrew.

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