

## OAKLAND BUSINESS &amp; Finance

# Leadership Oakland aids boy with cerebral palsy

BY ERIKA MARIONA

**D**uring the five-day work week, most of these Oakland County business leaders may know more about sifting through papers than about pounding a nail. But on a dreary Saturday, their hearts and hands went out to a Pontiac family who was on the verge of giving up.

"These feelings are really hard to explain," said Ken Childress, father of 4-year-old Ken Harbin, who has Cerebral Palsy and who was struggling with his mother, Tonya, to get his wheelchair down the cement stairs of their small Pontiac home.

The wheelchair ramp that was being built on Oct. 28, they said, would help their family with the stress.

"It was getting too much for my wife. I was at work all day worrying and now I don't have to," said Ken Childress. "It has nothing to do with color... that doesn't mean anything. It's just people wanting to help us and I'm lovin' it."

Those people who surrounded the family were 20 Leadership Oakland business leaders and volunteers who handbuilt a wood ramp that extends from the Childress porch.

"It sure will make things easier for us. It's been difficult to have to carry Ken up and down, and in and out of the car. With the ramp, it will be a lot easier on me," said Tonya, mother of Ken and 2-year-old Brittany, and who is expecting her third child.

Getting heard was half the battle, she explained, as some local agencies she tried to contact would not assist her because of Ken's age and disability. "There was always a lot of red tape and they'd give me the run-around. I was about to give up."

After contacting United Cerebral Palsy of Metropolitan Detroit in Southfield and then being

referred to Troy-based Leadership Oakland, Childress looked out her window on Oct. 28 amazed at the many volunteers who came out to help her son. Leadership Oakland is designed to ensure the continuing vitality of Oakland County by preparing motivated leaders who are educated about the county and its issues.

Over the past six years, Leadership Oakland volunteers have worked together on six community-service projects, the last three of which have involved ramp building. Oct. 28 was nationally known as "Make a Difference Day," and that's what happened. "You really have to work hard to find help for children. There really aren't any agencies who have time for children, and nobody pays for it," said Elmer Cerano, United Cerebral Palsy director and a Leadership Oakland alumnus.

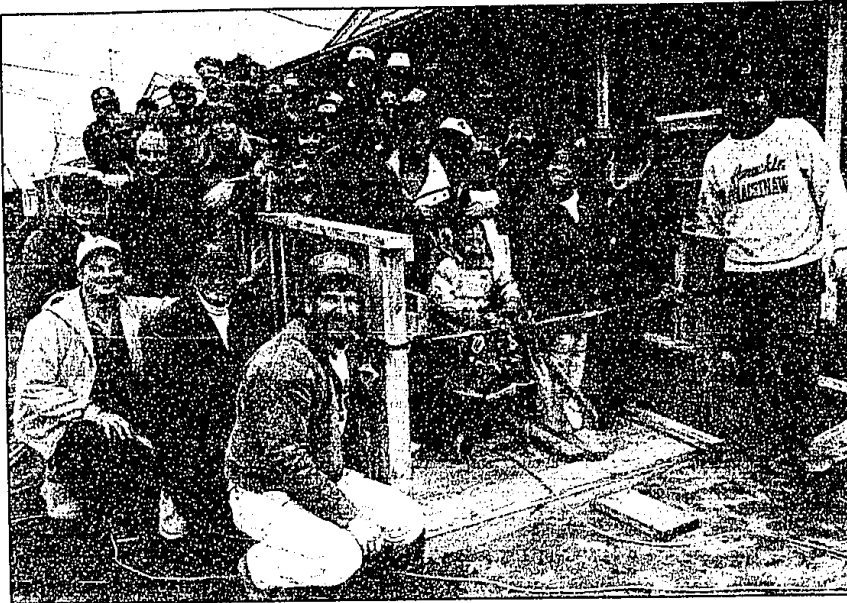
Cerano, who also volunteered his time to build the ramp, said, "It is a building experience. We aren't experts, but everyone works. We help each other out. And when we're done, everyone says, 'Man, we really did this.'"

Many of the other business leaders involved in the ramp building agreed with the feelings of accomplishment.

"To be successful is to truly know you've helped somebody, and that you've made a difference in somebody's life," said Barbara Miller, analyst consultant for Oakland County.

The Oct. 28 project, Miller's first since graduating from Leadership Oakland, added, "It's a wonderful experience."

Thomas Landry, president of Farmington Hills-based Ad Etkin Construction Co., said it was "great hands-on experience and a great way to meet new people." He was involved in last year's project for many reasons. This is an immediate satisfaction. You get it



STAFF PHOTO BY WILLIAM HANSEN

All aboard: The Childress Family is surrounded by the many Leadership Oakland volunteers and boosters who came out on a chilly Saturday to handbuild a ramp for 4-year-old Ken Harbin, who has cerebral palsy.

all done in one day, and you help out a family."

Nick Haab and James Page of Troy-based Ellis/Neysert/Generalmer Associates Inc. agreed. "It's remarkable, and it's a good feeling. You have to be willing to give back."

Leadership Oakland is sponsored by Oakland Leadership Council, formerly the Council of Chambers of Commerce of Oakland County. Participants in Leadership Oakland, a nine-month-long program, are encouraged to work individually and collectively to solve community problems. Oakland Leadership Council represents a consortium of 20 Oakland County chambers of commerce, including Auburn Hills, Birmingham-Bloomfield, Clarkston, Farmington-Farmington Hills, Lakes Area, Rochester, Orion, Southfield, Troy and West Bloomfield.

Lucia Sulewski of Leadership Oakland said the next project involving the Childress family will be to help raise donations for a deposit on a van with a handicapped lift. Because young Ken is in a wheelchair, the family is un-



able to take him places; and as he gets older he will be too heavy to carry.

The family wrote a letter. They say it's hard to take him to

the store, in the car or for an outing. There is no way for them to transport Ken. They want him to feel more as part of the family."

Sulewski.

Drilling away:

Jason Sulewski, 16, of Troy, helps fellow volunteers John Favenesi of Rochester Hills and Jim Page of Troy drill holes for Ken Harbin's ramp.

For more information on Leadership Oakland, call (810) 952-6350. To lend assistance to the Childress family, call (810) 332-8955.



Building together: Program coordinator Wendy Harriel (left) of Southfield assists executive director Lucia Sulewski of Troy with break-time snacks at the Leadership Oakland outreach ramp project.

## On-line potpourri: services range from seniors to kids



EMORY DANIELS

May I clear my desk of a few notes I've been keeping for readers?

Most are not of sufficient importance to warrant a full column and I hate to throw them away. So here are several short-takes.

First an E-mail message from Len Roberts of Canton. Remember, he's our on-line user who enjoys building home pages for holidays. Len is thinking about Thanksgiving and has been talking with will and I'd about it.

Len wonders if O&E On-line users would send him via E-mail the Universal Resource Locator (URL) that shows what they are thankful for. If you can't think of one, or can't find the appropriate URL, then just send an E-mail message to Len about what you are thankful for this year.

Len plans on building a home page including all the information sent him; a sort of interactive holiday page. To participate, send your message to lenr1@oonline.com.

### Senior resource

The Michigan Office of Services to the Aging has worked with Wayne State University to develop a Website for senior citizens which can be accessed by pointing

to <http://mass.log.wayne.edu>. You will find a wide range of aging information including phone numbers for local senior centers, councils and commissions on aging, Alzheimer's Association chapters, information about statewide programs such as Medicare/Medicaid assistance programs and the Retired Senior Volunteer Program, Social Security program information, and a toll-free national Eldercare Locator number.

The MOSA site also provides daily congressional updates and Federal Register announcements, access to local and national census information, demographic information on Michigan's aging population, and health information from the National Institute of Health.

The site is designed to be a planning tool for those engaged in delivering services to senior citizens but it is available to anyone with an Internet connection that includes World Wide Web access.

### Sing, Color 'n' Say

Leonore Paxton, partner of Troy-based children's book publisher Worldwide Press, has made "Sing, Color 'n' Say" available for browsing on the WWW. Point to <http://www.webpub.com/orldkids>

"Sing, Color 'n' Say" is a series of children's activity packs containing a coloring book with a story and a sing-a-long cassette. Each activity pack, such as "Going to Grandma's" or "Christ-

mas Time of Year," teaches children about cultures and customs from around the world while they color and play. At the end of each tape, children learn an entertaining phrase, like "I Love You Grandma," in 10 different languages.

By accessing the page, online users with sound-supporting software can hear a sample of songs from each title, view a page of the coloring book, and read a brief description of the activity pack. You can order online using Visa or MasterCard and have your purchase shipped to you.

### Dental page

Dentists or anyone else with Internet access can visit the American Dental Association's home page at <http://www.ada.org> on the WWW. ADA Online is anchored by the Dent News Digest, a real-time posting of important news in dentistry. Since July a high volume of information has been placed on this Website, such as: Today's News, Dentist Association News, General Dental News, Legislative and Regulatory News, Journal of the American Dental Association Preview, ADA News Preview, and Information Technology News.

Users are able to read, print or save all information to a file. A toolbar feature enabling users to send messages to the ADA Online editor.

In New Orleans

The New Orleans Metropolitan Convention and Visitors Bureau has a Website that can be accessed at <http://www.nawlins.com> and then upon arrival clicking upon "What's News."

The site aims to keep travelers and potential visitors to New Or-

leans abreast of what's happening in and around the Crescent City. The site will be updated weekly. The week of Oct. 16, for instance, featured information on the New Orleans Museum of Art, the Louisiana State Museum, a review of the Asilcom Grand Prix du Mardi

Gras, an overview of the new IMAX Theatre at the Aquarium of the Americas, and a listing of Halloween happenings in New Orleans.

The site also includes a 1995-96

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## Cadillac names Catera team leader

Cadillac Motor Co. named David Nottoli of Rochester Hills to head the Catera Brand Team. Composed of GM employees based in and outside Cadillac operations in Warren, the team will launch Cadillac's new luxury sedan, the 1997 Catera.

Cadillac formed the team earlier this year to handle marketing, advertising, sales, services and profitability strategies for Catera. Assisting Cadillac's team is the automaker's advertising agency, D'Arcy Masius Benton & Bowles, Bloomfield Hills.

Eight area Cadillac dealers were assigned to Catera Brand Team's advisory board. Nottoli, who joined the automaker in 1979, said, "It's fitting that we use a different structure that is focused on our market, our customer and our product to launch an all-new brand at Cadillac."



At the helm: David Nottoli heads the Catera Brand Team that will help launch the automaker's 1997 Catera, new luxury sedan.