

## BELIEFS Values

## COMMUNITY MESSENGER

Community Messenger features spiritual announcements from Oakland County religious institutions. Write: Community Messenger, c/o Beliefs & Values Editor, Observer & Eccentric! Newspapers, 805 E. Maple, Birmingham, MI 48009. Our fax number is (248) 644-1314.

**MARDIN MUSIC SERIES**  
Nardin Park United Methodist church in Farmington Hills is hosting a nine-part summer music series entitled, "Wednesdays at Eight." Concerts will be presented each Wednesday at 8 p.m. at the church located at 29387 W. Eight Mile Road, (just west of Middlebelt) in Farmington Hills. Each program is one hour in length, casual in demeanor and free to the community. Upcoming concerts will include, pianist Barbara Witte, mezzo-soprano on July 8 and "Concertos" Gospel Music Ensemble on July 15. For more information call (248) 476-8860.

**HEALTHY COMMUNITY SABBATH**  
Churches and synagogues within the Birmingham School District have announced plans for their first annual "Healthy Community Sabbath." The event will be held Sept. 18-27 to raise awareness of substance abuse prevention. Congregations of all faiths will be encouraged to address substance abuse/prevention in one or more worship services during this extended week, and to pray by name for those engaged in the "front-line" drug prevention: police, educators, and health professionals. Interfaith worship resources, information about drug and alcohol use, and local resources will be distributed to all congregations. A special feature of "Healthy Community Sabbath" will be distribution of "Families of Faith Conversation" - a step-by-step guide for families to discuss drug and alcohol abuse/prevention sometime that week. The interfaith effort grew out of "The Summit" conversation sponsored by the Birmingham Community Coalition, and is being designed to lend spiritual aid to congregations and families in their concerns over substance abuse issues. Deaths from heroin overdose this past year of three young adults who had been students at Birmingham high

school have galvanized the community to respond to this serious community health problem in a united and urgent way. For more information contact the Rev. Louise Westfall at First Presbyterian Church at (248) 644-2040 or Dr. Stephen Jones at First Baptist Church at (248) 644-0550.

**MARRIAGE ENCOUNTERS**  
Worldwide Marriage Encounter, a Roman Catholic, non-profit organization dedicated to marriage enrichment, will host a Worldwide Marriage Encounter weekend July 17-19. The weekend experience is for married couples to improve their communication skills, learn the value of intimacy and renew their love for each other. The upcoming weekend will be hosted at the St. John's Family Life Center in Plymouth. For more information call Bill & Carol at (248) 928-2512 or Dan & Debbie at (313) 286-5524. Or [www.rnec.net/detroit/wwwme](http://www.rnec.net/detroit/wwwme).

**HEBREW CLASSES**  
Ellu v'Ellu, the metro Detroit area Jewish learning partnership sponsored by Congregations Beth Abraham Hillel Moses, Beth Shalom and B'nai Moshe, Hillel Day School, and Women's League for Conservative Judaism-Michigan Branch will offer conversational Hebrew classes for interested adults this summer. The course will be taught by community educator, Ahuva Newman. Both daytime and evening formats are available, on various levels from total beginner to intermediate/advanced. Minimum enrollment is required. Tuition is \$5 per hour for Ellu v'Ellu members, \$7 per hour for others. For more information call (248) 567-2739 or e-mail [Sabrin19@aol.com](mailto:Sabrin19@aol.com).

**BLAST OFF**  
"Space Mission Bible Camp" will be the theme for Vacation Bible School at First Congregational Church of Rochester in August. All children who have completed grades K-6 are welcome to attend. The camp will be held on August 11-14 from 9 a.m. to noon. Registration fee, which includes a t-shirt and cassette, is \$10 for the first child in every family and \$7 for each additional child. Non-members are welcome. Call (248) 651-6225 to register.

# Follower of the Lamb

## Our Shepherd volunteer honored for work

BY BARE PERT TEMPLETON  
SPECIAL WRITER

Sharing the teachings of the Bible with youngsters is an important part of Kathleen Morris' life.

If those pupils happen to have special needs that require a more relaxed style of instruction, that's no problem for Morris. She'll take all the time they need.

Such a warm and dedicated approach to religious education recently brought Morris the recognition of a Bethesda Lutheran Homes and Services, Inc., Follower of the Lamb Award. She was recognized for her organization of a Christ-centered program for children and young adults with mental and/or physical handicaps.

"Bethesda's board of directors created the Follower of the Lamb award to recognize individuals, organizations and congregations who educate people with mental retardation and help them reach their full God-given potential," David Geske, Ph.D., executive director of Bethesda said. "Another purpose of the award is to motivate and encourage others to do the same."

The award presentation took place during a worship service at Our Shepherd Lutheran Church in Birmingham. Laraine Schumacher, Bethesda's parish mental retardation ministries coordinator for Michigan, presented the award to Morris. The Rev. Ronald Young of Our Shepherd Lutheran assisted with the presentation.

Morris was nominated for the award by fellow church member Gary Friskorn. He praised Morris for her genuine love and concern for people with disabilities. The program Morris organized is ongoing and is open to students of area churches, in

**'The parents are super to work with and we have a very successful class. We're like one big family ... And I think the young people now teach me more than I teach them.'**

**Kathleen Morris**  
Follower of the Lamb winner

addition to members of Our Shepherd Lutheran.

"Kathleen Morris has graciously given herself and talents to help people with mental retardation. She is very deserving of this award," Geske said.

As a member of the church since 1959, joining when she was just 3-years-old, Morris has been a volunteer instructor for the special program for 23 years.

A founding organizer of the religious course at Our Shepherd Lutheran, Morris said the program started out as a Sunday school class but evolved into a special education young adult bible course.

"I had a special education brother, he had Downs Syndrome, and he was a student until he passed away in 1990," Morris said. "But I didn't start the class just for him. I had students from other churches come to the class, too. One young lady has been with me for 23 years."

Morris completed a 60-hour training course on how to teach the students at their level. She has often been asked to visit students at home to teach them on an individual basis, but sees the classroom setting as a better opportunity for the students.

**'Kathleen Morris has graciously given herself and talents to help people with mental retardation. She is very deserving of this award.'**

**David Geske**  
executive director, Bethesda Lutheran Homes

"I'd much rather have them come together socially as a group and study together," she said. "And I do not teach the Lutheran doctrine. I'm not here to convert anybody. I'm just teaching the bible. I do that through devotionals, music and activities."

Taking the program a step further, several years ago Morris introduced confirmation classes for young adults. She has had three sets of students complete the program and be confirmed at Our Shepherd or their own home church.

Currently the students are on summer hiatus but had been meeting on Thursday afternoons at the church. Morris' schedule is often flexible for the students, many who are now adults, because they have employment commitments.

"I have three students right now but I'm contacting area churches looking for new students. I can handle up to six or eight by myself," Morris said. Handling such a unique religious program for more than two decades brought another award Morris' way this past year.

Last October she was presented with the Ephphatha

Award by the Lutheran Special Education Ministries of Detroit. Only one person in the nation is presented with the honor each year.

"This was really nice because the award is a statue made by the students in the Lutheran Home in Wisconsin and no two are alike," Morris said.

Recruiting new students for the fall is Morris' current task. Several of her longtime pupils now serve as teacher's aides in her classroom or assist with the churches Sunday school programs.

"The parents are super to work with and we have a very successful class. We're like one big family," Morris said. "And I think the young people now teach me more than I teach them."

Students ages 10 and up who are interested in joining the bible study course at Our Shepherd Lutheran are encouraged to contact Morris at (248) 646-6100.

She would be happy to discuss the bible study program, meet with parents to outline the course.

Founded in 1904, Bethesda Lutheran Homes and Services, Inc., a leader in the field of mental retardation services, provides residential care and training for more than 700 adults and children with mental retardation.

With more than 50 facilities and support programs in 11 states, Bethesda continues to provide the very best in Christ-centered care and education.

The National Christian Resource Center on Mental Retardation (NCRC) provides free referral services and information on agencies, programs and services available nationwide.

The NCRC can be reached by calling 1-800-369-4636, ext. 418.

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