



## UF leads way to freedom

By LINDA ASHLEY

When Mary Ellen Havrilla reached her mid 20's, she wanted to move away from home and be on her own.

This simple goal, normal for most young adults, showed Mary Ellen's courage.

She has been crippled and confined to a wheel chair with cerebral palsy since birth.

She joined a group called Living Opportunities, Inc., a residential program for severely handicapped adults. The program was founded and sponsored by the United Cerebral Palsy Association of Detroit, a Torch Drive agency.

Because her parents were getting on in age, Mary Ellen decided it was time for her to get out and become independent.

**BUT HER** needs were unique. She also required constant supervision.

The answer was Living Opportunities.

The organization, 15 adults ranging in age from 21 to 41, share facilities with the geriatric patients at Oak Hill Nursing Home in Farmington.

Kathy Delaney, 23, was in a regular nursing home before coming to Oak Hill.

"I was very unhappy," she said. "There were all old people and there was nothing for me to do."

**"MY ROOMMATES** were 99 and 90. About a year ago I joined my sister, Sheila, here. I'm very happy now."

The group is not limited to cerebral palsy victims.

Both Sheila and Kathy have a degenerative disorder called Friedreich's Ataxia.

Wardwell, 41, and his friend, Tom De Mott, 22, were two of the earliest Living Opportunity members. They came from a nursing home where they were the only young people.

DeMott, recently graduated, was an honor student from Farmington Harrison High School. He is beginning parttime college classes.

**CONFINED TO A** wheel chair, his shoulders braced back, he is an artist beginning to sell his work.

Wardwell, often the spokesman for the group, explained the group's activities.

"We have a meeting once a month and democratically decide what our programs will be."

"Our recreation director, Mark Mercer, supervises activities twice weekly and helps plan trips about twice a month."

The trips are possible because of volunteer help and special vans equipped to transport wheel chairs.

**"OVER THE** years, you get to know people, little by little," said Wardwell.

"We've acquired some good friends, volunteers we don't hesitate to call from the surrounding suburbs."

(Continued on page 21)



Photographed by Gary Friedman