

Joan Ramsey:

Teenage volunteer extraordinaire

By JOAN WEAVER

With the walking cast on her left ankle slowing her down only slightly, Joan Ramsey strides down the corridor to resume her volunteer work helping to teach self care skills like buttoning, zipping, holding a glass or using a paper napkin to severely mentally impaired students at Cloverdale Developmental Training Center in Farmington.

Joan, a senior at Farrington High School, divides her volunteer work between Cloverdale and the Northville Residential Training Center, a separate facility from Northville State Hospital, but located on the state hospital grounds.

And she schedules her volunteer work after her regular job at the Pilot Engineering Company in Southfield where she reports each morning at 7:30, and after her classes at Farrington High School which begin at 10:45.

EXCEPT FOR THE time off necessitated by her broken ankle, the result of a skiing accident last month, Joan has been teaching language stimulation skills to three severely mentally impaired young men and one woman at Northville, every Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday evening since May.

Joan recently was given a certificate by the Northville Residential Training Center in recognition of 100 hours of volunteer service there.

She began giving two afternoons a week at Cloverdale last October, and today she picks up her duties in the self care portion of the curriculum where students between the ages 10-25 learn everything from brushing their teeth to dressing to table manners. And where the more advanced students learn to make brownies, or jello.

NONE OF THE students notice her walking cast, partly because curiosity is genetically dimmed and partly because, even if they noticed the cast, the impaired students do not have enough speech to ask what it is, why it is on her foot or how it happened.

Joan helps the students put place mats, glasses, plates and napkins on the round table for juice and cookies. Some are able to help hold the juice

container and pour. Others can follow instructions to pass the basket of cookies.

Still others can hold the glass and drink from it. Each of these accomplishments is a giant step.

A shadow of puzzlement passes over the students' eyes when they are instructed to place their hands in their laps until everyone is served. They obey, but they don't know why. Perhaps someday, they will.

ANN HILL who is the occupational therapist at Cloverdale, provides individual therapy and supervising the daily living portion of the curriculum. Everything is broken down into small steps and taught in a developmental sequence, she said.

Students are assigned to platoons according to their level of functioning, usually 10 students to each group.

The four classes are self care, fine motor skills, gross motor skills and developmental language. Mrs. Hill says they teach receptive language first, so the students can follow instructions and function, then they aim for expressive language.

There is one teacher for each 24 students. When you add aides, assistants and volunteers, the ratio is one adult to every five students. Fred Parker, supervisor at Cloverdale, says the volunteers are of tremendous value to the program there.

AT NORTHVILLE Residential Training Center on mid-week evenings, you'll find Joan working with adult students in building J.

"Alex is working on time," Joan said, "on 'o'clock's and '30's. He used to mix them up, but now he knows them all - and he can count to 15."

"James used to repeat everything. If I'd say 'Stand up,' he would just repeat the words. Now, he still repeats the words, but he stands up, too," Joan said.

With a solid, quiet pride in her student's accomplishments, Joan talks about Charlie who works with animal and food flash cards, identifying and repeating the specific food or animal. And Denise, who works with number concept cards with dots, and can count the rows of dots now to 8 or 10.

They are all rewarded at the end of the meeting with primary reinforcers, like M and Ms or stickers paired with

the social reinforcer of praise during teaching time.

"Denise likes the stickers," Joan said. "She has them all in a little pocketbook she carries around with her."

DOLLY La CROIX, volunteer coordinator at Northville Residential Training Center, said the lower the level of functioning, the more necessary it is to rely on primary reinforcers like M and Ms.

As the level of functioning increases, Ms. LaCroix explained, volunteers try to move each person toward social reinforcers alone.

There are 30 volunteers at Northville, and "They provide those extra hands for individual attention," Ms. LaCroix said.

Joan heard about the need for volunteers at Farrington High School, took the orientation courses, and became involved.

She remembers the educable mentally handicapped youngsters that were in special education classes when she was in elementary school.

"Some of them didn't have arms or had electric wheelchairs," Joan said. "Everyone used to kid around with them - tease them - it was really cruel. In junior high they had nicknames like 'demented.' It was just so wrong."

The wrongness of it left a lasting impression on Joan. Now, she said, "You accept them - that's the biggest thing - to accept people the way they are."

JOAN LIVES WITH her mother, Barbara Ramsey, a teacher at Longacre Elementary School, and a brother, Jeff. Another sister, Denise, is studying occupational therapy in Tennessee.

Joan plans to continue with her present schedule until July. Then she will leave her various volunteer activities for new ones.

The World Olympics for the Retarded will be held in Mt Pleasant in August, and Joan is planning to be among the volunteers there.

Then she'll head for Northern Michigan University in Marquette to prepare herself as an occupational therapist for continued work with severely mentally impaired persons.



JOAN RAMSEY

Genealogists play detective in tracking down family roots

By LORANNE McCLISH
A woman whose hope is to one day be a registered genealogist will help others trace their family roots when she opens a course next week in the Farmington Community Center.

Rosina Raymond, new president of the Detroit society for Genealogical Research, asked her first question about her family tree 13 or 14 years ago and has been "trying to fill in the holes ever since."

The holes she talks about are the blank spaces in the genealogy chart that she has charted back to middle Europe in 1654.

She likens her search to "playing detective" because "I just wanted to know. I've always had an inquisitive mind and I guess it started by wanting to know who I am, where did I come from - the same as some people want to know what's on the moon, what's in the ground."

AN INQUISITIVE mind is the one requirement she asks of her students. "That and a total interest," she said. "I'll supply whatever materials are needed and we'll take it from there."

She will take all comers; the beginner, the one who comes to

share, the one that's looking for more help, and those of any age.

"We (society members) hold a workshop every year and last year we worked with a group of Scouts, so the course is for all ages," she said.

As to her detective work, she writes everything down or puts it on tape because "the smallest clue may be a big find that you'll discover is part of a developing pattern."

She has utilized tombstone markings, church records, sometimes professions or trades that were carried over from one generation to the next, even an unusual first name of a female relative that was handed down from one to another, and in one instance, the fact that one branch of her family all had red hair.

THE SOCIETY she heads meets in the room that houses the Burton Collection in Detroit's main public library, "and you'd be amazed what you can find there. I was amazed at all they had there on Wisconsin" (the place of her birth.) "And the Mormons have fantastic records in Utah," she said.

Family names and their spellings are sometimes tricky things

to decipher and there are frustrations she's had, such as paying for a church record and having it delivered in German script (she got it translated however).

"But more often," Mrs. Raymond said, "I was lucky. Sometimes you can stumble across one little thing that will lead to filling in a big gap."

She knew, for example, that four male ancestors in one family died within a week of one another in a cholera epidemic. This piece of information turned out to be her identifying introduction to a family of distant cousins she stayed with and friends with in Europe, who in turn introduced her to all manner of access to further information on her family roots.

She found a mill that belonged to her great grandfather on that trip to the Ruhr area. He was born in 1812, and the mill had belonged to his father. And she found old letters that were a history in themselves.

THE STUDY OF genealogy is divided roughly in two parts: the making of the chart, or the tree, and writing a history of the family.

As she learned more about her family history, she thought of

turning it into a historical novel, but she gave up that idea, "because it's better to write it straight. For all the work that goes into this, you owe that to posterity," she said.

Being systematic is a must. "You are on your own with your own work," she said, "but you must be professional enough about it to follow a procedure."

Students will learn the procedure, set up by the society, be shown how to set up a tree and a simple family history. They will work from a simple paperback text and probably take a field trip down to the Burton Collection to learn how to utilize those records.

"ANYONE WHO makes a chart can have it filed there, or he might even find one that someone has done it for them so they will have that to start with," Mrs. Raymond said.

She is a teacher by profession. She teaches speech at Wayne State University, taught in the Livonia school system and at Madonna College.

Her genealogy class will be on Thursdays, beginning Jan. 23, from 9:30-11:30 a.m. Registrations are being taken at the Farmington Community Center.



ROSINA RAYMOND