

When you bring on the clowns, don't forget jolly Jelly



Joyce Epstein can turn into Raggedy Ann or other characters with a few swift strokes of facial make-up and clever costumes.

Story: SHIRLEE IDEN
Photos: MINDY SAUNDERS

Talk about being two-faced, Joyce Fields Epstein is working on a third. The diminutive Southfield woman, who already has her act polished as Jelly the Clown and Raggedy Ann, will soon introduce her pint-sized audiences

to Mickey Mouse. Mrs. Epstein has act and does travel. Mostly, she travels to birthday parties and holiday celebrations.

She doesn't know how to travel light, instead she carries three bags full of costume, make-up, puppets and surprises for the children.

She performs her original stories for children ages 2-8 in Southfield, West Bloomfield, Birmingham, Farmington, indeed, wherever called.

It's an inadvertent career, born serendipitously.

"I taught nursery school for 10 years," Mrs. Epstein said. "My boss just loved the stories I would invent for the children. He invited me to come tell a story at his child's birthday party."

"I decided to surprise him and got a hold of a clown costume. After it was over, he suggested I go into business."

Mrs. Epstein did just that and her "sideline" took off so successfully that she quit regular teaching. Occasionally, she still substitutes in area nursery schools.

But doing three or four one-hour shows each week keeps her very busy.

"I DO GAMES, bring records, give instruments to each child and we have a marching band," she said. "I use all kinds of props."

Some of the puppets are ones she has seen and purchased, others she has

made herself. "I can't resist buying puppets when I see good ones," she said.

After her show business career began, Mrs. Epstein found some small children were afraid of clowns. So she augmented her Jelly the Clown character with her own version of Raggedy Ann.

"And right now I am having a Mickey Mouse costume made for future shows," she said.

Since most birthday parties are at lunch time, it is usually difficult to plan more than one show a day. But Mrs. Epstein's shows are so in demand, that often a mother will schedule an 11 a.m. party so she can perform again at a 2-4 p.m. dessert gala.

"The most I ever did was three parties in one day," she said. "I've been to

'I was always shy. In fact, people who knew me in high school can't believe I'm the same person they knew back then.'

— Joyce Fields Epstein

just about every restaurant that ever was the setting for a birthday."

She also does larger parties for organizations, usually in conjunction with a holiday.

Putting together her shows involves writing, dramatic ability and artistic creativity as well. Yet, Joyce Epstein has no formal training in drama.

"I dropped out of speech class three times in college because I was so petrified of speaking in front of an audience," she said. "I was always very shy, but I've gained confidence as I went along."

In fact, she contends, "People who knew me in high school can't believe. I'm the same person they knew back then."

Though she has no formal theater training, Mrs. Epstein will teach a theater class at Congregation Adat Shalom in Farmington Hills. It will be a one hour class for nursery school students.

When she enters the room at a birthday party, the character she is then playing says to the children, "I don't like telling stories by myself, so you're going to have to help."

From that opener, she goes into her stories, games and fun activities. The children eat it up and guess what? Parents love her as well.

You can reach Jelly the Clown, Raggedy Ann or Mickey Mouse by just calling 844-8942.



JOYCE EPSTEIN

Nursery school sets 3 new tot programs

Adat Shalom Nursery School will institute several new programs for its second semester, which begins Jan. 20.

A parent-toddler session for children from 20 months to 3 years will introduce the very young to the socialization and development offered in a nursery situation.

For children who will be 3 before June 1980, a session will introduce

them to taking that first step toward independence.

For the children already enrolled in Adat Shalom Nursery, a supplemental program will be offered that includes lunch. This program is called "Marvelous Monday."

All inquiries will be taken by the school's director, Janet Post, by calling 851-5105.

New cookbook shipment in

The Farmington Community Center has received a second shipment of the cookbook, published and edited by volunteers of the center as a fund-raiser. It contains tried and true recipes contributed by friends of the center.

Ruth Falabee, chairman of the


project, said she was extremely pleased with the response to the sale.

"Many are buying several copies for gift giving," she said.

The book is available for purchase in the center on Farmington Road north of 10 Mile Road, for \$6 a copy.



Raggedy Ann (Mrs. Epstein) poses with her friends the birds, flowers and an ice cream cone.



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